Introducing *Paranoid Fixations*

Art and political discourses since 9/11

Abstract

Paranoid Fixations: art and political discourses since 9/11

Global terrorism has presaged the emergence of new security states accompanied by heightened levels of social anxiety and irrational fear. This thesis investigates how contemporary screen and digital cultures have fuelled a collective sensibility of paranoia since the September 11 2001 attack on the World Trade Centre towers—a catalyst from which spectacles of irrational fear have emerged through global media networks. I contend that the escalating culture of paranoia, animated by the screen and digital media circuits of post 9/11, has resulted in a fixation with the repetitious potential of disaster as media events, which in turn becomes part of public consciousness. The thesis considers recent work by artists alert to this dynamic such as Gregor Schneider, Harun Farocki, Hito Steyerl, and Jane and Louise Wilson, all of whom are increasingly conscious of the power of contemporary screen and visual cultures in escalating societal fears.

Paranoia is a central organising theme for the thesis, which is explored through Jean Baudrillard's conception of paranoia as a fixation on the media's endless repetition of image events; Nikos Papastergiadis' notion of 'ambient fear' in the wake of 9/11; and Franco Berardi's positioning of paranoia as a potential yet indefinable threat to and from capitalism. I consider these key precedents in relation to more contemporaneous theorists including Jacques Rancière, who disputes the Baudrillardian rupture between the event and its symbolic meaning; Patricia Pisters' reappraisal of Baudrillard's position on the image event within the multi-screen aesthetic of new media and cinema; and Hito Steyerl, who locates irrational fear within networks of global surveillance.

In light of these reflections, the overall aim of the thesis is to examine the ability of artists to work with the complexities and contradictions of the frequently anxious and confused worldview portrayed in much of screen culture and media. In discussions of my own artwork and other related artists, I contend that certain artistic strategies may point the way to a mode of practice that is politically effective. I posit that

strategies of irony, dissensus and estrangement are effective models for a politically attentive art practice, which does more than simply reflect our social anxieties.

Introduction

Contemporary screen and digital cultures have played a significant role in the construction of paranoia in public consciousness since the events of September 11, 2001.[1] The rise of digital cultures following September 11 has resulted in the accelerated repetition of digital images of the attack on the World Trade Centre on 9/11 through a variety of media forms and networks. The resulting fixation with the repetitious potential of disaster has contributed to discourses of irrational fear within the public consciousness. *Paranoid Fixations* investigates how contemporary art responds to these discourses.

The motivation for this investigation has been the desire to develop a critique of my own practice and an exploration of a range of artists locally and internationally. This critique has been developed to reveal the role that art has played in exploring and responding to this paranoia as the fixation with the repetitious potential of disaster in society today, and in doing so aims to give voice to a number of diverse artistic strategies that have been adopted. In order to do this effectively it was crucial to examine a range of artists across a variety of media and influences. However, this thesis has also sought to include artistic strategies that correlate with my own practice in order to provide a useful critique of my art projects. This has meant that specific attention has been given to artists engaged in installation art, digital media and visual culture who work with themes pertaining to the construction of paranoia in relation to global issues. This thesis asserts that art can be effectively employed to make visible issues of autonomy and paranoia, security and surveillance, the role of overt patriotism and the nation-state. In doing so, it discusses how particular art forms can point the way to a more dissensual approach to these tropes, as proposed by Jacques Rancière. It also asserts that art is able to explore the complexities and contradictions of a frequently anxious world view as represented in cinema, social media and in the realm of politics.

Specific attention is given to the representation of paranoia in art and media. In initial

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[1] Broadly speaking, *digital culture* is defined as any media that may incorporate issues relating to the nature of the image and its relationship to artistic practice, autonomy and online identity, resistance, immaterial labour, global governance, or neoliberalism. More recently debates have developed around digital data, the mobile multi-screened world, algorithms and data, and new directions in the moving image.

investigation it was found that paranoia was not featured in much recent theoretical debate. Instead, related terms such as 'anxiety' and 'schizophrenia' appear to have more currency in contemporary art and political writing. Jean Baudrillard argued in *The Ecstasy of Communication* that our world situation has changed; that "if paranoia was the pathology of organisation, of the structuration of a rigid and jealous world" then with the emergence of continually connected networks of communication and information, then this takes a new form "of schizophrenia."[2] Other recent comparative literature includes that of Brian Holmes, the art critic and activist who is known for his writing on the intersections of artistic and political practice. Holmes also adopts the term schizophrenia in explaining the nature of recent digital cultures, stating that the "contemporary circuit of [digital] communication" has taken the form of schizophrenia.[3] He argues the reality principle no longer holds and has been replaced by an internal reality that may conflict with the external world, hence schizophrenia. Patricia Pisters, a professor of media studies specialising in film uses the term schizophrenia to explain the nature of emerging digital cultures where "the (schizophrenic) brain can provide us with a model for our contemporary existence, especially in relation to electronic and digital images."[4] Her position is part of emerging studies in neuro-aesthetics and noopower.[5] Whilst outside the scope of this thesis, authors such as Warren Neidich and Pisters see our connection to social media to be significant. If the mind is an extension of these digital networks then "for Neidich the line between a subject's mind and the environment is blurred," and that the Internet is in one sense "the new home of Mind."[6] Similarly, the term 'anxiety' is used in critiquing art in this millennium. The relationship between anxiety, paranoia and schizophrenia is explored more fully in the following section.

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[2] Jean Baudrillard and Sylvère Lotringer, *The Ecstasy of Communication*, Foreign Agents Series (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Autonomedia, 1988). 132.

[3] Brian Holmes, "Guattari's Schizoanalytic Cartographies," *Continental Drift: the other side of neoliberal globalization. Retrieved from* (2009).

[4] Patricia Pisters, "Synaptic Signals: Time Travelling through the Brain in the Neuro-Image," *Deleuze Studies* 5, no. 2 (2011).

[5] Noopower refers to the mind as a complex embodiment of systems of social and counter-intelligence media. The mind is then in effect an extension or an embedded system within these systems. Noopower suggests that the human mind becomes highly vigilent and can be a form of contemporary paranoid delusional behaviour. See Robert William Gehl, *What's on Your Mind? Social Media Monopolies and Noopower*, 2013 (2013), noopower; Facebook; marketing; military communication.

[6] Ibid.

The term *paranoia* was used more prevalently in the twentieth century with the emergence of new critical directions in theatre, poetry and early cinema. This was particularly evident in movements such as the Theatre of Cruelty of Antonin Artaud,[7] and Jacques Lacan's 1931 thesis on paranoia published in *Minotaure*.[8] Minotaure, published in Paris between 1933–39, was a Surrealist-oriented publication founded by Albert Skira with editors André Breton and Pierre Mabille. Artaud, the playwright, poet, writer and actor in theatre and film is discussed more fully further on in this chapter. In the same period the Surrealist movement adopted Dalí's 'paranoiac-critical' method in artwork and their early cinematic experiments. The technique consisted of the artist invoking a paranoid state, resulting in the deconstruction of the psychological concept of identity, leaving the subject in a state of paranoiac flux.

This thesis proposes a re-examination of the role of paranoia as it relates to the fixation with the potential of disaster following the attacks of 9/11. Specific attention is given to the contribution of discourses of irrational fear within the public consciousness. This thesis further proposes that paranoia is an obsession or tightly held view where symbols, such as that of the planes hitting the Twin Towers, become fixed in the public consciousness as the endless repetition of an image-event.[9] Today, in the current political climate of the so-called War on Terror, art can have a role in exploring the multiple representations of paranoia.[10]

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[7] Albert Bermel, *Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014).

[8] *Paranoid Psychosis and its Relations to the Personality* in Anthony Elliott, Jeffrey Prager, and Ebscohost, *The Routledge Handbook of Psychoanalysis in the Social Sciences and Humanities*, vol. 1 (New York: Routledge, 2016). 96-97, E. Hofmann Irene, "Documents of Dada and Surrealism: Dada and Surrealist Journals in the Mary Reynolds Collection," *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 22, no. 2 (1996). 132.

[9] The term image-event was coined by Baudrillard particularly in describing 9/11. This term is applied to this thesis to his view that all media events were ultimately non-events, or the simulacrum of an increasing "absolute banality and everyday obscenity". He applied the term image-event to everything in the everyday but most significantly to the Gulf War, where he challenged the relationship between media and the military. The term was especially applied in his assessment of contemporary events such as 9/11. He suggests that the simulacrum functioned as a significant tool for social control. In William Merrin, *Baudrillard and the Media: A Critical Introduction* (Polity, 2005).; Jean Baudrillard, Chris Turner, and Jean Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism ; and, Requiem for the Twin Towers* (London: Verso, 2002). 21

[10] The term War on Terror was coined by the then U.S. President George W. Bush in his address following 9/11, in which he articulated his intention to consider an endless war, "a task that does not end," an argument he reiterated in his 2006 State of The Union address. *War on Terror* in Stephen Lacey and Derek Paget, *The 'War on Terror': Post-9/11 Television Drama, Docudrama and Documentary* (Cardiff [UK]: University of Wales Press, 2015). 39-43.

Importantly, even though this thesis is grounded in the events of September 11, it acknowledges the subsequent effect of the global rise of Al-Qaeda and the *Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)* terror threats that have become so pervasive globally.[11][12] It can be argued that the acceleration and repetition of digital imaging and video following September 11 has had a continuing symbolic effect on subsequent governmentality and popular perception since then. Stuart Croft suggests there is much to learn about US government policy after September 11 by understanding the discourse of fear behind the various responses to this significant strike on the US mainland.[13] In developing strategies aimed at countering terrorism, US officials constructed "a narrative [of fear] that could be shared amongst those who felt threatened".[14] While these policies have conceived at the very top of government, a culture of irrational fear has permeated a range of media forms and social media, thereby maintaining a fixation of irrational fear within the public consciousness–increasingly in relation to anti-Arab sentiment. Croft goes on to note that the logic of irrational fear "had to match an emotional register; consequently, there quickly emerged a foundational image that would serve to memorialize the events and victims of 9/11."[15][16]

This thesis discusses strategies for art that recognise the value of theoretical and philosophical discourses of Baudrillard and Rancière in particular. It does not offer an in-depth critique of philosophical concepts or a significant description of contemporary art. Instead, it demonstrates how concepts from philosophy and

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[11] Other global terror related events following Septermber 11 include: 2002–Bali– al Qaeda for a car bomb; 2002–Russia–from Forty Chechen fighters engaging with Russian special forces; 2004–Madrid al Qaeda-linked bomb attacks in metro; 2004–Beslan, North Ossetia–330 dead–Islamist terrorists take 1,200 people hostage; 2005, London 52 dead–suicide bombers–al Qaeda; 2008, Mumbai; 2014–Brussels 4 dead; 2014–Pakistan 148 dead–Taliban gunmen; 2015–Paris 17 dead Islamist extremists–satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo; 2015–Tunis, Tunisia 21 dead–Islamic State; 2015, Kenya –gunmen storm a university campus; 2015–Egypt 224 dead–Russian-operated jet crashes in Egypt, killing 224–Islamic State claims responsibility; 2015–Beirut 43 dead. Gary LaFree and Laura Dugan, "Introducing the Global Terrorism Database," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 2 (2007).

[12] Terrorism according to Roser and Mohamed Nagdy is a contested term. "Terrorism is usually understood as the use or threat of violence to further a political cause. There is no universally agreed definition of terrorism making it a difficult object to quantify." M Roser, "Life Expectancy. Published Online at Ourworldindata. Org," (2016).

[13] Stuart Croft, *Culture, Crisis and America's War on Terror* (Cambridge University Press, 2006). 2

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Michael Welch provides an effective introduction to these issues since September 11 in George Dr Morgan and Scott Poynting, *Global Islamophobia: Muslims and Moral Panic in the West* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2012).

current theory can be used to see art in new ways as an effective response to global issues. Throughout this thesis a number of models are explored and proposed for artists working within the political realm.

The section that follows provides an overview of key theorists and artists, and of the current literature used in this thesis. It also provides an account of my development as a young artist while living in Chile and Argentina, with a particular emphasis on how this experience has affected my art practice today.

a. Research context and creative concerns

This section charts some of the key writing, positions and creative concerns relating to discourses of fear and paranoia in art and visual media since September 11, 2001. It serves as a review of the literature on existing research about the subject matter whilst outlining how themes of the construction of paranoia, cinema and terror, ambient fear, and borders are conceived of within the thesis. More essentially, the discussion here aims to focus the meanings of these terms within the specific contexts that are chosen, with the main theorists and artists reviewed within the context of the themes outlined. Finally, an overview and explanation is provided of the origins of my art practice in the context of the time I lived in Chile as a young artist in the final years of the regime of Augusto Pinochet. It explores the relevance of the particular political milieu in Chile to my current practice as an artist and its influences on this thesis.

a.i. Fixing paranoia on the object

This section provides an overview of the key meanings of paranoia. Key theorists then contribute to a deeper understanding of paranoia. In this thesis, the terms *paranoia* and *irrational fear* are used interchangeably.

Paranoia is generally defined as a condition of having an unreasonable level of fear, where a reasonable level of fear is seen as appropriate to a given situation. Paranoia is a more extreme reaction to the situation. Where fear is a rational response, paranoia is a more extreme or irrational response to a situation, hence the usage of the term irrational fear in this thesis.

The *Online Oxford English Dictionary* refers to paranoia as being:
1. Orig., dementia. Now, a mental illness characterized by delusions of persecutions, unwarranted jealousy, or exaggerated self-importance.
2. A tendency to suspect and distrust others or to believe oneself unfairly used. colloq.[17]

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[17] Oxford English Dictionary, "Oxford English Dictionary Online," *Mount Royal College Lib., Calgary* 14 (2004).

Paranoia has a number of other historical references. Significant examples I will consider include Sylvère Lotringer's critique of the work of Antonin Artaud, and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's reflections on the relationship between paranoia and capitalism.[18] Lotringer's interpretation of the work of Artaud attempts to explain the rise of modern capitalism and fascism between the two major World Wars. In doing so he argues that Artaud was reacting to the particular situation arising between the two World Wars: "He was responding through his own body to the anxiety of the rapid changes at the time".[19] Lotringer argues that Artaud's mania was expressed through his Theatre of Cruelty and his other artwork. Lotringer perceives Artaud's theatre to be a visceral response to the heightened social paranoia of 'a world gone mad' under fascism. He goes on to argue that it was the world that was 'in effect' becoming mad, not simply Artaud. Lotringer perceives that Artaud, as an artist, exposed himself to the predicaments of the world in order to make them visible. Artaud, according to Lotringer, was both infected by his own psychological condition and by the state of the world.

Douglas Smith supports Lotringer's position in his essay on a particular trip that Artaud made to Ireland in 1937 at a time of considerable social anxiety in Europe. Artaud increasingly exhibited paranoia in both his own personal condition and of the world around him. Smith notes an "increasingly apocalyptic tone and content, predicting imminent cataclysm" in Artaud's correspondence from Ireland.[20] Smith goes on to postulate that: "Artaud lost his sense of self at a time when most European countries were furiously reinforcing their sense of identity."[21] He argues that this corresponds to the nationalistic and ideological enmity between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia during the 1930s. Britain also sought to strengthen its own national identity both culturally and technically during that period. Smith argues that "[o]n the one hand, the dissemination of Artaud's identity runs counter to this consolidation of the nation-state across Europe." Artaud, in contrast,

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[18] Sylvère Lotringer, Gaston Ferdière, and Jacques Latrémolière, *Fous D'artaud* (Sens & Tonka, 2003). 39-42.
[19] Ibid. 39-4.
[20] Douglas Smith, "'Travelling Light in the Upper Stor (E) Y': Artaud in Ireland," *Irish Journal of French Studies* 7, no. 1 (2007). 34
[21] Ibid. 34-35.

exhibited the behaviour of an alienated and conspiratorial individual while in Ireland leading to his arrest and to the beginning of his ongoing confinement in a series of institutions.[22] Yet in a universal sense, Artaud's paranoia can be perceived as mirror for the contemporary historical situation. His apocalyptic predictions "resonate with widespread fears of imminent war. Inevitably, his delusions borrow the political language of the day, frequently deploying a rhetoric of political reaction, including misogyny, anti-Semitism, anti-Communism and anti-Republicanism".[23] Parallels can be found in some of the accounts of paranoia I outline in my account of the time living in the last years of the military regime in Chile. This is discussed in the final section of this chapter.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* view paranoia within capitalism as a rigid form.[24] Deleuze and Guattari are responding to their times as did Artaud. Theirs is a response to the social backlash against the Vietnam War. They call for a "Free political action from all unitary and totalizing paranoia" when dealing with all forms of fascism.[25] Essentially, to paraphrase Foucault from the preface to *Anti-Oedipus,* freedom for the paralysis of totalitarian paranoia means to develop a system of action or thought where singular (fixed) or hierarchical modes of functioning are replaced by positive and multiple modes, where differing positions are considered.[26] This is elaborated on in the chapter "The Body without Organs.". Paranoia is at once "reactionary, fascisizing" and ultimately fixed, while the modern activist is positive and considers multiple, differing positions, coined the "schizoid revolutionary pole."[27]

A more recent overview of positions on paranoia include a number of media and social theorists, including Elizabeth Cowie and the interpretation of her position on paranoia by Umberto Eco; and also Paul Virilio, Baudrillard, Rancière and Slavoj

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[22] Ibid. 27-28.
[23] Ibid. 35.
[24] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 1988).
[25] *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (New York: Viking Press, 1977, 1983). xiii
[26] Ibid. xiii, xx.
[27] In the fourth thesis, Deleuze and Guattari's "schizoanalysis" develops a political analysis responding to the perceived reactionary tendencies of individual psychoanalysis. In ibid. 366-7.

Žižek. Elizabeth Cowie, a political academic and professor of film studies, sees paranoia as taking two forms: psychosis and anxiety.[28] As a form of psychosis it can be a type of "not-knowing through the creation of an (internal) belief system that responds to the foreclosed."[29] In other words, paranoia can be a condition where a psychosis prevents the individual from responding to the world. With anxiety, paranoia is expressed as a terrible anticipation. The anxious paranoiac has an excessive response to fear of a given situation, resulting in an escalation of anticipation of some future dread.

Umberto Eco, the Italian novelist, essayist, philosopher and semiotician, interprets Cowie's 'not-knowing' of paranoia as an obsessive returning to the object of suffering, often fixed on an undefined object or event. In Eco's novel *Foucault's Pendulum*, the character Casaubon describes this obsession as a form of looping, where "wanting connections, we found connections always, everywhere, and between everything."[30] Specifically, Casaubon wants to expose the arbitrary relationship between events that may form a paranoid conspiracy. Eco is demonstrating that once a connection has been made and some form of context established, the relationship—despite being arbitrary—is a persistent one. In terms of this thesis, this is an important point. It will be argued in Chapter 1 that this connection can be formed through repeated exposure to news coverage of an event, especially in a highly visual form where the perpetrator is clearly defined as a threat to the viewer. The threat can be established as a readily absorbed metaphor such as a dark mask, a balaclava or hood. The threat remains as some other possible representation of a paranoid subject. The masks adopted by terror groups are examples of this. The relationship of the mask (or even the hijab) to irrational fear has become fixed as a symbol. In the morning directly following the attack on the World Trade Centre in New York the news coverage globally reused the initially compiled video footage in a variety of repeated versions of the escalating coverage of the original event. This thesis proposes that footage of planes colliding with the sides of the twin buildings became fixed in the public

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[28] Elizabeth Cowie, "The Art of Paranoia," (London: Freud Museum, 2006).138-148.
[29] Ibid. 140.
[30] Umberto Eco, *Foucault's Pendulum* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1989).

consciousness as it was repeatedly played back over the following weeks through global media. It argues this position from the perspective of Baudrillard's concept of *hyperreality*.

Paul Virilio, the French cultural theorist, links paranoia (as a deep fear) to the media. In *A Landscape of Events* Virilio observes that following the bombing of the World Trade Centre, the world had entered into a new order of terror where the media (television and news events) became part of a frightening escalation of global terror and irrational responses by world powers.[31] The implication is that television is central to this irrationality. The image, both static and temporal, "links closely to terrorist escalation."[32] In his 2012 text *Administration of Fear*, Virilio interprets the escalating influence of media following 9/11 to be part of an "acceleration of reality" rather than a disappearance of reality as argued by Baudrillard.[33] He perceives irrational fear to be part of the excess of speed, of media and of reality.

Jean Baudrillard in *Simulacra and Simulation* uses the term paranoia when discussing contemporary forms of fascism and the media.[34] He suggests that the rise of global terror corresponds with the rise of media. He perceives that the defining issue is a "decline of strong referentials, these death pangs of the real and of the rational that open onto an age of simulation."[35] As Cowie argues in *The Art of Paranoia,* paranoia as represented by the media, becomes fixed on an "undefined object or event".[36] For Baudrillard these fixed media images are inherently inert regardless of the dynamism of the content.[37] They are fixed into a grid of (non)meaning that is inherently repetitious and repeatable—their repetitiousness also indicates their failure to adequately carry the meaning they indicate. The

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[31] Paul Virilio, *A Landscape of Events* (Mit Press, 2000). 156-159.
[32] Ibid. 23.
[33] Bertrand Richard Paul Virilio, *The Administration of Fear* (MIT Press, 2012). 33.
[34] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, The Body in Theory (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).18.
[35] Ibid. 33.
[36] Cowie. 141.
[37] Dynamism of the content is used in throughout this thesis to refer to the apparent excitement created by images in media. News stories have dynamic quality because of the images and video clips that support them. However, the repetitive nature of 24-hour news cycles and social media these images lose their effectiveness; they become inert.

repetition of the images of terror and world events corresponds to paranoia as that fixation with the repetitious potential of disaster, such as the image-events following 9/11. The image is remediated endlessly as a static, inadequate replacement for these events. It could be argued that this represents the classic psychological structure of paranoid neurosis in Freudian terms.[38] These points of Baudrillard are key to this thesis, and will be developed further in the following chapters.

Another such example of this fixation can be found in the metaphor of the hooded, balaclava-wearing terrorist. The image of the hooded figure functions as a trigger for the escalation of irrational fear. The balaclava-clad plane hijacker produces the same fear response as that of the planes hitting the Twin Towers of 9/11. The balaclava is adopted by Bronia Iwanczak in an artwork titled *Eating Face; Carnival Exchange* (figure 1).[39] Iwanczak is a multidisciplinary, Sydney-based artist with an interest in the relationship between global economics and terrorism. In her catalogue essay she describes the masks as "face-hugging wearables to reiterate the incarnation of nation. The empty woollen masks gape menacingly, their national allegiance explicit, but their inner nature intangible."[40] These masks invite us to contemplate "the relationship between global economics and terrorism." The mask acts as a symbol of deep suspicion, a trigger for social paranoia as much as the wired vest of the bomber, the unattended baggage or the flag of ISIL does in this millennium.[41] This theme is explored further in Chapter 1.

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[38] John Farrell, *Freud's Paranoid Quest: Psychoanalysis and Modern Suspicion* (NYU Press, 1996). 31-33.

[39] Bronia Iwanczak, *Eating Face; Carnival Exchange,* 2001. hand woven wool objects suspended variable.

[40] Jacqueline Millner, ed. *Exit/Salida* (Los Angeles: Absolut LA International Biennial, 2001).

[41] Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

Figure 1. Bronia Iwanczak, *Carnival Exchange; Eating Face*, 2011

Mixed media, dimensions variable. Reproduced: Absolut LA International Biennial, http://www.bronia-iwanczak.com/defence-rhythm-2001/. Accessed 12 June, 2014

In my more own recent projects such as *Feedback* (2012) and *Spectres of the Spectrum II* (2013) I explore of the role of data and networked connectivity in the anxiety of contemporary society.[42] As indicated earlier, Eco perceived the deep anxiety of modern life to be obsessively seeking meaning. Similarly, in these two projects I reflect on the conspiracy theorist's need to find connections. Data and networks are attached to anatomical brains to form paranoiac connections to images and data. Dr Jacqueline Drinkall, in the accompanying exhibition catalogue *Brainrain*, explains that my installation incorporates "wires to trigger paranoid thoughts in viewers' minds" (Figure 2).[43] Those entering the exhibition space "experience the flash of paranoia that one might experience at the sight of a ticking abandoned object or the sound of a siren." The viewer may even reflect more carefully "on how fear, conspiracies and paranoia circulate through minds, objects and world [events]."

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[42] Gianni Wise, *Willing Participant,* 2011. 15 surveillance microphones, audio recording devices, wiring, speaker, audio mixer, digital counter., variabe. Exhibited with Scott Barnes, Biljana Jancic, and James as part of Feedback. *Spectres of the Spectrum,* 2013.
[43] Jacqueline Drinkall, ed. *Brainrain* (Curated by Gianni Wise: Alaska Projects, 2013).
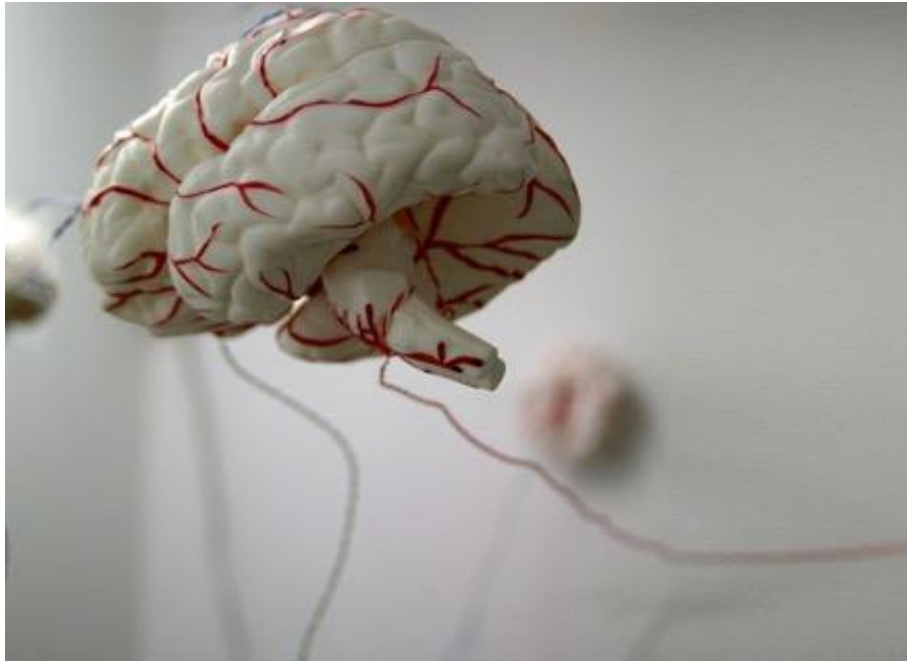
Figure 2. Gianni Wise, *Spectres of the Spectrum II*, 2013.

Installation 15 anatomical model brains, resin, telecommunications cabling, LED devices, electricians tape, timber. Reproduced Gianni Wise, http://www.gianniwise.com/index.php/artworks/brainrain/, accessed March 12, 2015

Jairus Victor Grove postulates that the nature of paranoia could be perceived in two ways: that paranoia has its own logic in the psychological sense; or as a form of *mass paranoia* where people have reached a state of exhaustion from simply witnessing world events.[44] This concurs to a degree with the position held by the Italian Marxist writer Franco 'Bifo' Berardi in his 2015 book *Heroes: Mass Murder and Suicide*.[45] Berardi reflects on paranoia through a discussion of the film *Don't Take Shelter,* where the main character Curtis, a young husband and father, is overwhelmed by a series of apocalyptic visions of a nightmarish storm.[46] Curtis is overcome by a sense of dread. It is uncertain whether Curtis is the victim of paranoid delusions or whether he is able to actually predict a future catastrophic event (figure 3). Curtis's wife is worried. Her husband's behaviour is strange. She is shocked by

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[44] From a recent dialogue with Jairus Victor Grove, Assistant Professor of International Relations,Department of Political Science, University of Hawaii, presented as a series of online lectures*;* Nicole Sunday Grove Jairus Victor Grove, "The Horror of Security: Introduction" (paper presented at the The Horror of Security: Contemporary Geopolitics in a Permanent Beta Phase, Michigan, 2015).

[45] Franco "Bifo" Berardi, Heroes: Mass Murder and Suicide, (London, New York: Verso, 2015). 302-306.

[46] Jeff Nichols, "Don't Take Shelter," (USA: Sony Pictures Classics, 2011).

his apparent paranoid behaviour and "realises Curtis has mental health problems."[47]
At the brink of mental breakdown, he builds a shelter: "He envisages a tornado
warning sends him and his family into the shelter… Curtis is on the beach, turns his
head and looks at the sky. Impressive clouds are announcing the most frightening of
all storms… a tsunami is growing in the distance."[48] Berardi sees this film as a
metaphor for the nightmarish possibility of an imminent global disaster. Berardi
observes significantly that Jeff Nichols, the film's director, was working on the plot for
the film at the end of 2008, following the Lehman Brothers bankruptcy. Nichols
confirms that this was a time when there was an ambience of fear following the stock
market crisis of 2007-8.[49]

Figure 3. Jeff Nichols, *Take Shelter*, 2011

Reproduced © 2011 - Sony Pictures Classics. http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1675192/, accessed March 12, 2015

Take Shelter recalls Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*, in that both films carried the
inexplicable premonition of an indefinable threat to life. Berardi argues that the
premonition of "social catastrophe" in these two films parallels the escalation of real
events emerging to cause and accelerate our irrational fears.[50] Berardi sees
paranoia through the escalation of media as being something that we "need to free
ourselves from".[51]

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[47] Berardi. 303.
[48] Ibid. 304.
[49] Independent Film Channel, ""Take Shelter" Director Jeff Nichols Clears the Air,"
http://www.ifc.com/2011/09/jeff-nichols-take-shelter-interview.
[50] Berardi. 305.
[51] Ibid. 317-318.

a.ii. September 11 as an image-event

This thesis investigates how certain discourses in contemporary screen and digital cultures have acted as conduits for irrational fear and paranoia. In doing so it recognises how the September 11 attack on the towers of the World Trade Centre acted as a catalyst from which spectacles of irrational fear could emerge through global media networks. When Baudrillard, in *The Spirit of Terrorism*, asked: "How do things stand with the real event then, if reality is everywhere infiltrated by images, virtuality and fiction?" he was referring not only to 9/11 but to a collapse of the relationship between the actual event and its simulacra.[52] He posited that this collapse into simulacra was the result of the seemingly endless repetition of media images of the planes hitting the towers. Apart from Baudrillard, a number of theorists have written responses to 9/11 as a trigger for irrational fear through the mediated image.[53] Žižek, Patricia Pisters, Berardi, Virilio and Jill Bennett provide a range of responses to the significance of September 11 (9/11) as the key theme of this thesis.

Baudrillard has stated that the attacks on the Twin Towers were (almost) predicted. It was if "[w]e have dreamt of this event … everyone without exception has dreamt of it. … At a pinch, we can say that they did it, but we wished for it."[54] Similarly, Slavoj Žižek argued that on the day of 9/11, citizens of New York were "'introduced to the 'desert of the real,'"[55] a landscape so "corrupted by Hollywood" that the "landscape and the shots of the collapsing
towers could not but be reminiscent of the most breathtaking scenes in big

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[52] Jean Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism and Other Essays*, New ed. (London ; New York: Verso, 2003). 27-8.
[53] Examples of the mediated image can be readily found on Google. various, *Images of 9/11* (Google Images, 2003), image.
[54] Baudrillard, Turner, and Baudrillard. 9-10.
[55] Žižek discusses the 'passion for the Real': [which] culminates in its apparent opposite, in a theatrical spectacle". He uses a quote from the Wachowski brothers' film *The Matrix* (1999) as the title for the book.

catastrophe productions"[56] In other words, Žižek argues that "the unthinkable which happened was the object of fantasy, so that, in a way, America got what it fantasised about, and that was the biggest surprise."[57]

Returning to Baudrillard, his point that the act of having dreamt the 9/11 event means we had already imagined its existence in news media, television and cinema. Baudrillard has been chosen as a key theorist in this thesis for his particular focus on media and its relationship to 9/11 as the "ultimate event" and the seeming endless stream of disaster movies that emanated from the 1990s.[58] According to Baudrillard, what took place on 9/11 had already existed as an image-event before September 11, 2001. Following 9/11, the repetition of images through the media created a form of implosion where the 'real event' imploded with the model or image-event. The collapse of the Twin Towers was followed by a collapse (or implosion) of media imaging. The symbol then replaces the event. Today the site of the Twin Towers is one of these symbols. This implosion is the site where the paranoid tendency exists as a fixed idea, as an obsession or tightly held view where symbols, such as the plane hitting the tower, become fixed in the public consciousness. Kevin Glynn, supports Baudrillard in his essay on the role of visual media events through an analysis of the attacks of 9/11:

> Media events have become important sites of political activity … They involve (often spectacular) visibility, the articulation and circulation of meaning, and the formation of powerful discourses and counter discourses.[59]

It is important to note that Baudrillard considers that 9/11 represents a symbolic attack on the heartland of the US: "Were the Twin Towers destroyed, or did they collapse? Let us be clear about this: the two towers are both a physical, architectural object and a symbolic object (symbolic of financial power and global economic liberalism). The architectural object was destroyed, but it was the symbolic object

[56] S Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real! : Five Essays on 11 September and Related Dates* (London ; New York: Verso, 2002). 15-16.
[57] Ibid. 16.
[58] Jean Baudrillard, "L'esprit Du Terrorisme [the Spirit of Terrorism]," *Le Monde*, November 11, 2001 2001.
[59] Kevin Glynn, "Visibility, Media Events and Convergence Culture: Struggles for the Meaning of 9/11," in *Mediated Geographies and Geographies of Media*, ed. Susan P. Mains, Julie Cupples, and Chris Lukinbeal (Dordrecht: Springer, 2015). 293.

which was targeted and which it was intended to demolish."[60] He is both acknowledging the significance of the actual attacks while still stressing the primacy of the symbolic meaning of the event as repeated and fixed in the public consciousness. Baudrillard sees the symbolic meaning of the attack on the World Trade Centre as being "when events accelerate so much, one has to slow down—without becoming engulfed in a jumble of words and in the clouds of war, and without losing sight of the unforgettable flash of images."[61] It is as if the world is so saturated with images (of events such as these) where the primary experience of the event is the image-event.[62] This theme is reiterated and developed throughout this thesis. The September 11 attack on the Twin Towers is now enshrined as an image event through the construction of the 9/11 Memorial site, through video clips, images, visual recounting of events and memorabilia.[63]

In *The Administration of Fear,* Paul Virilio differs from Baudrillard in arguing that the issue of a loss of reality following significant events such as 9/11 was more to do with the speed of an event as it is transmitted via various media. He drew attention to the impact of digitisation of media events–events, which were expressed as almost "instantaneous interaction[s]" thus "destabilizing the relationship of human interactions, and the time reserved for reflection."[64] Irrational fear could then be perceived as a product of the speed of flow of the media, and thus amplified especially after 9/11.

Similarly, Patricia Pisters is in general agreement with both Virilio and Baudrillard in terms of the 9/11 event and the subsequent War on Terror. In her text *The Neuro-Image* she perceives the world after 9/11 as a war of images, a "new regime of images."[65] Pisters concurs with Baudrillard in seeing that 9/11 was a significant media event, with the dramatic collapse of the towers "caught on countless professional and amateur cameras and distributed in a dense global network across

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[60] Žižek., 29-30.

[61] various.

[62] Image-event, as used by Baudrillard, is employed in this thesis to refer to media images as well as interchangeably.

[63] National September 11 Memorial Museum, "9/11 Ground Zero Tours," National September 11 Memorial Museum, https://911groundzero.com/?gclid=CKe5oMq4_9ECFRdvvAodv3ICbQ.

[64] Paul Virilio. 31-32.

[65] Patricia Pisters, *The Neuro-Image : A Deleuzian Film-Philosophy of Digital Screen Culture*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012). 319-20.

different media—that the conditions of the large-scale emergence of the neuro-image were amplified."[66] Her term *neuro-image* is derived from her notion of the twenty-first century urban dweller "caught up in the vortex of networked digital and digital screens—screens that are themselves always already connected to assemblages of power, capital, and transnational … information."[67] Pisters posits that the typical urban dweller is part of a global screen culture, one which is increasingly interconnected to networks via the human mind with the rise of the internet, and in turn escalating the rate of repetition of the image-event.[68] Importantly Pisters draws a connection between "attack by Islamic fundamentalists" and the "transitioned US power toward the era of the War on Terror, with the war(s) in Iraq and Afghanistan," both of which brought about devastating consequences: "With every attack, or … threat, increased measures of control and surveillance became more severe and invasive," including CCTV cameras, facial recognition scanning, and the rise of dataveillance by nation-states and corporations. These issues are investigated further as part of Chapter 4.

Jacques Rancière, in contrast, questions whether there was a rupture the symbolic order after 9/11. In a short chapter titled "September 11 and Afterwards: A Rupture in the Symbolic Order" in *Dissensus,* he argues against Baudrillard's position.[69] Rancière contends that 9/11 did not see any change in the connection between the actual event and its symbolic meaning. For Rancière there could be no break between the symbolic meaning and the impact of the real event in the collapse of the Twin Towers. He argues that there was no change in America's response—of the paradigm of good versus evil—thus no rupture. "September 11 and Afterwards" lacks any real critical response to other current theorists on this subject. Rancière does not attempt to engage directly with any of the writing on symbolic order by Baudrillard or Žižek (in *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!* for example). It could be contended that Rancière fails to see the strategic irony inherent in Baudrillard's position on 9/11 in

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[66] Interestingly Pisters sees 9/11 as the second major significant event after the fall of the Berlin Wall: "these two dates mark specific events related to assemblages of conditions that are connected to the transition toward a new regime of images. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, witnessed on millions of television screens and news broadcasts all over the world." Ibid. 318.
[67] Ibid. 9-10.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Jacques Rancière, "September 11 and Afterwards: A Rupture in the Symbolic Order," *Dissensus: On politics and aesthetics* (2010). 97-111.

texts such as *The Spirit of Terrorism*. Rancière, amongst other theorists, acknowledges that simulation or hyperreality illuminates the virtual dimension of media events, but then goes on to dismiss Baudrillard's position as simply an erasure of all concrete determinants of the event.[70]

Jill Bennett, in *Practical Aesthetics,* sees the need for the (traumatic) effects of 9/11 to have a "reorganisation; in new ways of working—of seeing, doing, thinking, perceiving through art or other aesthetic forms."[71] She specifically speaks of *Documenta 11,* "the first major '9/11' show," curated by Okwui Enwezor in 2002, for which he made attempts to map the diverse and unpredictable responses to 9/11 rather than selecting grandiose art productions of more spectacular nature.[72] Bennett suggests that since 9/11 art has reoriented itself toward realism, replacing older, more didactic approaches, which had previously attempted to explain why an event such as 9/11 occurred[73]. Hence this has seen the rise of the documentary form in art, which is evident in the work of two artists that are critiqued later in this thesis: Hito Steyerl and Richard Mosse. This rise of the documentary form in art has seen a focus on more recent events and politics. Bennett observes that the politics of 9/11 played out as "high-key affects: fear, anxiety, anger," as an emotional and often irrational narrative through networked visual media. Images are repeated, increasing social tensions and irrational fear responses. Bennett sees this as "'American emotionalism' manifest in image consumption." This argument is developed further in the discussion on Richard Mosse's video production in Chapter 2.

a.iii. September 11 as participant in making history

This section briefly contends that the September 11 attack on the towers of the World Trade Centre continues to maintain significance as a catalyst for spectacles of irrational fear in current global media and politics.[74] After 16 years, in which armed

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[70] John Keller is one prominent theorist who disputes Baudrillard from a similar position.
[71] Jill Bennett, *Practical Aesthetics: Events, Affect and Art after 9/11* (IB Tauris, 2012). 18
[72] Ibid. 18-19.
[73] Ibid. 21-22.
[74] Theorists such as David Rapoport, have made a case for the relationship of 9/11 to the rise of more recent of attacks. David C Rapoport, "The Four Waves of Rebel Terror and September 11," *Anthropoetics* 8, no. 1 (2002). A number of global terror related events following Septermber 11 have included but not limited to: 2002–Bali– al Qaeda for a car bomb; 2002–Russia–from Forty Chechen

conflict in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, costing US$ trillions, refuses any easy resolution, the War on Terror, and the politics of torture precipitates ideological ruptures, 9/11 has maintained its centrality as the "ultimate event".[75] This section argues that the continuing significance of September 11 can be attributed to the escalation of narratives of irrational fear through meta-terror strategies by state intelligence bodies, Jihadist groups (such as ISIS), and mainstream and social media; and secondly the memorialisation of the physical site at Ground Zero as the 9/11 Memorial, which also serves as a constant reminder of the possibility of future attacks.[76]

Figure 4. Stills from YouTube September 11, 2001, arranged into a news narrative

Reproduced © 2014 Backflash971. https://youtu.be/IjXgbpkKnKo, accessed December 12, 2016

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fighters engaging with Russian special forces; 2004–Madrid al Qaeda-linked bomb attacks in metro; 2004–Beslan, North Ossetia–330 dead–Islamist terrorists take 1,200 people hostage; 2005, London 52 dead–suicide bombers–al Qaeda; 2008, Mumbai; 2014–Brussels 4 dead; 2014–Pakistan 148 dead–Taliban gunmen; 2015–Paris 17 dead Islamist extremists–satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo; 2015–Tunis, Tunisia 21 dead–Islamic State; 2015, Kenya –gunmen storm a university campus; 2015–Egypt 224 dead–Russian-operated jet crashes in Egypt, killing 224–Islamic State claims responsibility; 2015–Beirut 43 dead. LaFree and Dugan.

[75] Baudrillard.

[76] The perception of terrorism is, frequently, not informed by actual terrorist activity, but rather what has been referred to as *meta-terror*, or the irrational fear caused by online and media representation of terrorism, which as Baudrillard states is unconnected to any actual threat. Meta-terror has four basic manifestations: 1. the media promulgating ISIL terror threats in the form of video; 2. reporting on speculation of terror attacks (or fake news); 3. media accepting ISIS related reporting from global secret service organisations as real (such as lone attacks); 4. fake terror or 9/11 stories. The term meta-terror is related to *ambient fear* (in Chapter 3).

The attack on the Twin Towers of September 11 2001 was experienced originally through broadcasts from major television studios. These studios became [the] "active catalysts of the [rapidly unfolding] events—not records or documents."[77] The years following September 11 have seen a further remediation of the original documentation of these attacks through a range of evolving newer media forms: video journalism, online digital video, and significantly through online social networks (figure 4). The increasing reliance on visualisation of news events through digital imaging and YouTube video clips contributes to a memorialisation of the September 11 attacks. It contributes to the propagation of narratives of irrational fear of a probable return of an Arab "post-9/11 terror threat."[78] These narratives are integral to the adoption of meta-terror strategies by state intelligence bodies, Jihadist groups (such as ISIL) and global news media.[79]

Arguably the coverage and perception of future Jihad 'terror' attacks by global media outlets and from the security community has symbolic roots in September 11. An example that surfaced in various US media outlets in 2016 was a public media statement made by the CIA Director John Brennan: ""[t]hat would be our biggest fear, finding out that Syria ordered the attack," Brennan said, adding, "[t]hat would signal a new front in the war against terror here and would be the first such attack—ordered by the motherland—since 9/11."[80] Significantly a majority of these news outlets that reported Brennan's media statement included an image from the devastation of September 11 (figure 5).[81] Another form of coverage has been the adoption of "9/11 themed programmes and stunts" especially on the tenth and fifteenth anniversaries where "US television networks and cable channels geared up for an orgy of alternately maudlin and informative specials oriented around the remembrance of 9/11."[82]

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[77] Hito Steyerl, "Too Much World: Is the Internet Dead?," *e-flux journal* 49 (2013).

[78] Evelyn Alsultany, "Arabs and Muslims in the Media after 9/11: Representational Strategies for a" Postrace" Era," *American Quarterly* 65, no. 1 (2013). 163.

[79] Importantly, Russell Frank's article provides an overview of the contribution of image-based memes through the manipulation of digital images disseminated on the Internet directly after September 11. Russell Frank, "When the Going Gets Tough, the Tough Go Photoshopping: September 11 and the Newslore of Vengeance and Victimization," *New Media & Society* 6, no. 5 (2004).

[80] Jami Schram, "Cia Boss 'Worried' Isis Is Planning a Major Attack in Us," *New York Post* 2016.

[81] Ibid. News outlets include Fox News, CNN, ABC, AOL News, NBR, PBS, New York Times amongst others.

[82] Janet McCabe et al., "In Debate: Remembering 9/11: Terror, Trauma and Television 10 Years On," *Critical Studies in Television: The International Journal of Television Studies* 7, no. 1 (2012). 85

Is ISIS Planning 'European 9/11'? Officials Say Terrorists Working On Worse Attacks Than In 2015

BY SNEHA SHANKAR ON 01/09/16 AT 6:21 AM

Figure 5. World Trade Center Tribute in Lights Sept. 10, 2014

Following the September 11 attacks the Internet has increasingly been referred to as a "safe haven," or "virtual sanctuary" for terrorists and the construction of fear.[83] Groups such as the US Tea Party, Alt-right (of the Republican Movement) and ISIL have adopted tropes of global paranoia and catastrophe through the evocation of the memory of September 11.[84] It has become clear that ISIL's ability to recruit and expand is not bound by "spatial limitations of" any nation state.[85] The global influence of these groups suggests that their very effectiveness is due to very same liberating aspects of global flows of data, images and video that have allowed neo-liberal economies to flourish. The emerging global influence of social media has permitted all these groups to engage in the politics of fear entangled in discourses originating the events of September 11.

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[83] Tim Stevens, "Security and Surveillance in Virtual Worlds: Who Is Watching the Warlocks and Why?," *International Political Sociology* 9, no. 3 (2015). 205

[84] Oxford Dictionary defines alt-right as: "(in the US) an ideological grouping associated with extreme conservative or reactionary viewpoints, characterized by a rejection of mainstream politics and by the use of online media to disseminate deliberately controversial content."

[85] Stevens. 205

This has become increasingly evident in the last decade with the rise of what has become known as post-truth politics. As Steyerl argues, the Internet is now more potent than ever with increasing adoption of the image and video generating imaginative interpretations of world events.[86] It has become clear that images are not objective records of pre-existing events.[87] Historic moments such as Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 (remember the image of the student blocking a line of tanks?) have ceased being simply documents. Since September 11 images have taken on multiple new lives. They are not simply a memory substitute for the collapse of the towers but digital forms that take on new life as they "migrate" from one support (internet to screen to server), "shaping and affecting people", political and social systems.[88] The Internet has allowed the proliferation of multiple mutant image recollections of September 11, something that has completely surpassed television as the primary medium for image circulation. Original video footage of September 11 has now been archived in mutated forms–edited, Photoshopped and montaged, yet collected permanently as data across multiple servers and networks. The memory of September 11 has now acquired an immortality that could ever have been achieved prior to the evolution of the Internet. There is now a perpetuity of an abstracted, simulated reality of September 11 that mutates but is always archived somewhere on the global network.

But original production has also become mixed up with circulation to the point of being indistinguishable. When the New York Times website posts a commentary from the CIA on ISIL or post-9/11 anxieties of a reoccurrence of September 11–this in turn is mutated and entangled as post-truth on a Breitbart blog post.[89] Images of the Twin Towers attacks are by becoming increasingly fragmented in a networked world. As the image of September 11 is re-appropriated by state, media and jihadist groups, meaning becomes increasingly imbued with the remnants of former images. Any reality of September 11 is now so reimagined, "rendered as after-effect."[90]

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[86] Steyerl.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.
[89] John Nolte, "9 Pieces of Documentation That Vindicate Trump's Claim of 9/11 Muslim Celebrations," *Breitbart*, 1 December 2015 2016. A claim made by Donald Trump that Muslims were seen celebrating while the Twin Towers were collapsing. Supposedly he had "just-uncovered local CBS News (WCBS-TV in New York) report completely vindicates claims of "thousands and thousands" of Muslims celebrating the fall of the World Trade Center."
[90] Steyerl.

Season 6 of Showtime's *Homeland* television series provides a case in point of the re-imagining of the trauma September 11.[91] While the media is circulating ISIL threats when appropriating their video and other visual material, ongoing series like Homeland memorialise the terror attacks of 9/11 via cable Television. The promotional trailer for *Homeland* Series 6 on the Showtime YouTube channel included a number of references to 9/11 both visually and within the show's dialogue. The role of terror and deep fears is re-imagined throughout the series where reconstructions of bombing mimic and supplant the original event (figure 6). The lead character Carrie Matheson in explaining why Series 6 was shot in New York argues: "[t]his whole world went crazy after 9/11, and none knows better I do. To put it plainly, this is a crucial place in terms of terrorism."[92] The actor who plays the character Saul Berenson adds at the conclusion of the trailer: "when you work on most things on television or movies it's a bit further away from reality. In the case of Homeland you can't get away from it". The cast in the original trailer are strategically positioned in front of the Manhattan skyline where they explain the import of presenting Season 6 in New York and why September 11 is still central the US state narratives of terror and security.[93]

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[91] Howard Gordon Alex Gansa, "Homeland," in *Homeland*, ed. Alex Gansa (Fox TV, 2011).
[92] Showtime, "Homeland Season 6. Teaser Trailer. Claire Danes & Mandy Patinkin Showtime Series,"ibid. (Showtime, 2016). It first appeared on YouTube in November 2016.
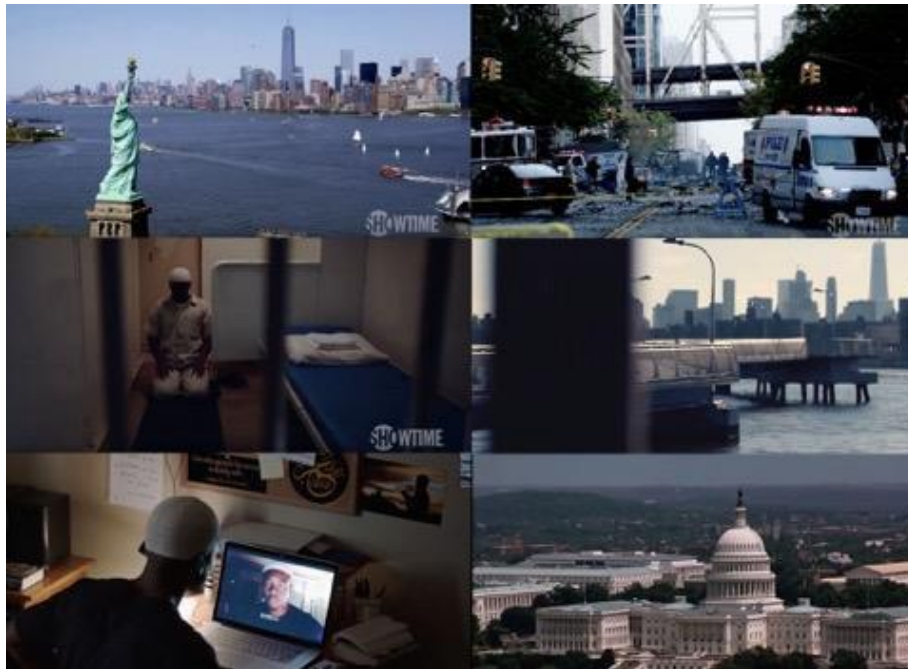[93] Howard Gordon Alex Gansa, "Homeland,"ibid., ed. Alex Gansa (Fox TV, 2011).

Figure 6. Homeland Season 6. Teaser Trailer (stills). 2016 Showtime

Reproduced © 2016 Showtime, https://youtu.be/m9MvePNpnGg, accessed December 12, 2016

James Castonguay argues that there is a lacking in critical response, even within the scholarly community, to the program's "regressive ideologies and repressive politics". He strongly suggests that many are missing salient meanings inherent in the Homeland series that "successfully exploit post-9/11 insecurities, psychological paranoia through "quality television propaganda" for the Obama administration's "overseas contingency operations"".[94] According to Castonguay Homeland is complicit validation of these post-9/11 insecurities that in turn contribute to" the rise of conspiracy theories and increasing levels of state and surveillance (dataveillance).[95]

There has been an emergence of cinema since September 11 that similarly memorialises and reflects paranoid narratives of the current US "democratic security state."[96] A useful example can be found in the two Spider-Man films–one produced in 2001 just before and the other in 2014 (figure 7). Spider-Man (2001), was a fairly innocuous yet unintended opportunity for Americans to relive the recent tragedy of

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[94] James Castonguay, "Fictions of Terror: Complexity, Complicity and Insecurity in Homeland," *Cinema Journal* LIV, no. 4 (2015).
[95] Ibid.
[96] Timothy Melley, "Covert Spectacles and the Contradictions of the Democratic Security State," *StoryWorlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies* 6, no. 1 (2014). 161

September 11.[97] In contrast, Spider-Man 2 (2014) is set in a post-9/11 world–one which, is now more human and vulnerable reflecting the deepened anxieties 15 years on from the event. Spider-Man 2 is now cast as the average man, reflecting the deepened anxieties, and subsequent paranoia feelings that average Americans might express. As a New Yorker, Spider-Man is now symbolically linked with the city. So as a result, one might understand him as representative of the reaction of the city and the nation in the post 9/11 world. Yet despite sympathetic treatment of this troubled super hero character–his paranoid emotionally confused state provides him with "superpower disorder" reflecting the fears and concerns of a troubled new post-attack state.[98] The heroes' self-questioning is possibly similar to the self-reflection that America as a nation was forced to undertake after 9/11.

Figure 7. The Amazing Spider-Man 2, still, 2014

Reproduced © 2014. Sony Pictures Entertainment, accessed February 8, 2017

The devastated site of the attacks of September 11, are now transformed as *Ground Zero* and the *9/11 Memorial* museum.[99] The site now is erased of any physical reference to the tragedy yet still serves as a constant reminder of the possibility of

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[97] Trailers for *Spider-Man* were edited so a scene (the scene with the Twin Towers was deleted from the actual film) showing Spider-Man capturing a helicopter with a web suspended between the towers was deleted. A scene of Spider-Man suspended from a flagpole with the American flag, was added in response to the attacks.

[98] Spider-Man is given this attribute here ("superpower disorder") in similar way that the lead character Kerrie Mathison whose paranoid style is "biologically wired" (as Homeland's producers describe it) through which she is able to have extraordinary abilities to confront the enemy–in extraordinary times such as September 11.

[99] Harriet Senie and Press Oxford University, *Memorials to Shattered Myths: Vietnam to 9/11* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016). 161-2. See Senie's article for an effective account with a useful analysis on the museum. Details on the actual 9/11 Memorial Museum have not been included in this section.

future attacks. The memory remains, however, due to the memorial's location.[100] Visiting the site requires mandatory online checking followed by high levels of screening, contributing to a generalised anxious ambience. As Adam Gopnik points out in an article on visiting the 9/11 Memorial: "[it's a] celebration of liberty tightly policed; a cemetery […]; an insistence that we are here to remember […] and the promise that we will never forget—visitors experience these things with a free-floating sense of unease."[101]

The Twin Towers that once dominated the skyline have been substituted by a memorial titled *Reflecting Absence* designed by Michael Arad, in a site suggesting two voids left by these two towers (figure 8). Interestingly, according to a study by Harriet F. Senie, memorials such as Arad's work have seen a trend "towards increasingly experiential modes of commemoration, which are more akin to installation art than to sculptural forms."[102] Adjoining this quite minimal, formalist work is the September 11 Memorial Museum. Despite the effective erasure of the destruction through the voids of *Reflecting Absence*, the effects of 9/11 memory remain, "however, not prompted by the site that originally defined it, but by "a memorial and museum that in various ways reimagine the attacks.[103]

[100] Memorialisation has also increasingly to do with the rise of nationalist authoritarian popularism.
[101] Adam Gopnik, "Stones and Bones: Visiting the 9/11 Memorial and Museum," *The New Yorker* 14 (2014).
[102] Harriet F Senie, *Memorials to Shattered Myths: Vietnam to 9/11* (Oxford University Press, 2016). 18, 89
[103] Harriet F. Senie to OUP Blog, 29/11/2016, 2016, The authors, staff, and friends of Oxford University Press provide daily commentary on global events., http://blog.oup.com/2016/09/fifteen-years-after-september-11/#sthash.M9Ip2dtf.dpuf.

Figure 8. Memorial at World Trade Center Ground Zero, George Hodan, 2013

Reproduced © 2013 George Hodan, public domain licence, accessed February 8, 2017

Marita Sturken in a discussion of the role of Ground Zero at the 9/11 Memorial notes that following the attack, when it became clear that there were no more survivors in the rubble of Ground Zero, it was decided that it would become the site where many of the dead "would never be recovered."[104] Mayor Giuliani made the decision to have the dust from the site ritually placed into memorial urns for the families of the dead. Sturken interprets this to be an attempt to "make the dust sacred, to turn it into a relic, reveal[ing] many aspects of the construction of meaning at Ground Zero in the years since 9/11."[105] She goes on to suggest that acts such as these have memorialised the site and thus maintain a narrative of US exceptionalism where this site and act of terror is continuing to be eulogised as unique in US history. Ground Zero, since 2001, has become a space defined by and memorialised through various media forms. This experience is remediated through images as event recollection that maintain the primacy of the spectacle of irrational fear in the public conscience.[106] Sturken also notes a plethora of objects that were retained from the site and are now acquiring the status of quasi-religious relics. Included in these are jagged shards of former structures that hung suspended over the ruins of Ground

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[104] Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero* (Duke University Press, 2007). 165.
[105] Senie Title of Weblog.
[106] "images" here is again used in the expanded sense–of display relics, objects and video footage.

Zero. These were famously photographed by Joel Meyerowitz–resembling fragments of a gothic cathedral–an uncanny reminder of the gothic references of the structural skeleton of the towers' construction (figure 9). A few weeks after September 11, Metropolitan Museum Director Philippe de Montebello suggested that one of the jagged fragments ought to be kept for a future memorial. For de Montebello, this fragment was not only a relic of the tragedy, but was "already, in its own way, a master piece"–not simply because it has evoked the haunting image of a catastrophic ruin, but because it resembled an enormous art object on display in a contemporary art institution. Numerous other examples of historical artefacts as employed as art objects. One which is striking as an almost Duchampian readymade is a solitary brick from the Abbottabad compound in Pakistan where Osama bin Laden was killed in 2011 (figure10). As an art object, the brick is "displayed prominently in the museum as a form of evidence, with a quasi-legal status, as an indicator that indeed bin Laden's killing did take place."[107] Perhaps its presence allows the viewer an imaginary narrative of righteous retribution for the attacks of September 11, or even a fantasy of the restoration of national power.

Figure 9. Aftermath, Joel Meyerowitz, 2001

Reproduced © 2011 Joel Meyerowitz, Courtesy Edwynn Houk Gallery,
http://au.phaidon.com/store/photography/aftermath-9780714862125/, accessed February 8, 2017

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[107] Marita Sturken, "The 9/11 Memorial Museum and the Remaking of Ground Zero," *American Quarterly* 67, no. 2 (2015). 473.

Figure 10. brick from the Abbottabad compound, 2011

In concluding this discussion, two other aspects need to be briefly noted when considering the September 11 attack's continued significance as a catalyst for irrational fear today. One of these is the rise of the "paranoid style conspiracy theory", following September 11. This rise has is discussed more fully in the following section. What is important here is that the conspiracy theory–whether it takes the form of a denial of the actual attack or some other variation on the theme–has the effect of maintaining 9/11 in the public consciousness.[108] Apart from this, legitimate questions could be asked about how September 11 could act as a catalyst for irrational fear–and how this apply to other recent key events such as the 'Bali Bombing, the Martin Place Lindt Siege and other more recent attacks in Paris and Berlin.[109] This would be a legitimate area for further research.

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[108] Carl Stempel, Thomas Hargrove, and Guido H. Stempel, "Media Use, Social Structure, and Belief in 9/11 Conspiracy Theories," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 84, no. 2 (2007). 355, 357.

[109] The 2002 Bali bombings occurred in the tourist district of Kuta on the Indonesian island of Bali, killing 202 people. It was Jemaah Islamiyah, a militant Islamist group. The 2014 "Sydney siege" of the Lindt Café, Sydney involved a lone gunman who carried an ISIL flag. The **2015** Paris attacks were coordinated attacks in Saint-Denis, Paris, killing 130 people. The Berlin attacks involved a truck driven into a market befoe Christmas. All these events were symbolically as public as Septeember 11 and thus designed for maximum impact.

a.iv. Further key terms

A number of related terms are defined in the context of this thesis, including: *conspiracy theory*, *ambient fear,* the contested term *image,* and lastly the *Other* as a term of exclusion within the social body.

The term *conspiracy theory* has been adopted to imply a sustained misrepresentation of the facts, and thus bares a relationship to paranoia. Superficially, defining it appears to be obvious. The *Online Oxford English Dictionary* defines conspiracy theory as:

> The theory that something happens as a result of a conspiracy between interested parties; *esp.* a belief that some powerful covert agency (typically political in motivation and oppressive in intent) is responsible for an unexplained event.[110]

Generally, a conspiracy theory is associated with negative connotations such as an over simplification, under or over emphasising particular characteristics of a situation, or simply a tendency that bares a minor relationship to the actual situation. Yet the conspiracy theory label can be applied as a dismissal of legitimate alternative views. Jack Bratich, a theorist in media studies, examines the rise of what he calls 'conspiracy panics', or the anxiety over the phenomenon of conspiracy theories in his text *Conspiracy Panics: Political Rationality and Popular Culture.*[111] He argues that conspiracy panics are an easy dismissal of difficult views and that in fact conspiracies theories could provide useful "portals into a deeper comprehension of major social issues defining U.S. and global political culture".[112] These issues include the rise of new technologies, the social function of journalism, US race relations, citizenship and dissent, globalisation, biowarfare and biomedicine, and the shifting positions within the political Left. Using Foucault's analysis of power, Bratich

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[110] Dictionary.
[111] Jack Z Bratich, *Conspiracy Panics: Political Rationality and Popular Culture* (SUNY Press, 2008).
[112] Ibid. xi

maintains that conspiracy panics contribute to a broader political rationality, a neoliberal strategy of control. He also explores the growing popularity of 9/11 conspiracy research in terms of what he calls the "sphere of legitimate dissensus."[113] He is particularly interested in the sort of gatekeeping that is evident in politics where 'dissensual views' on events such as the causes of 9/11 are excluded from public discourse.[114] *Conspiracy Panics* concludes by suggesting that we are witnessing a new fusion of culture and rationality, one that is increasingly shared across the political spectrum. In an interview with the artist Suzanne Treister in 2014, I asked whether she felt the term conspiracy theory could be applied to her art practice in any way. Treister has worked over the last twenty years, making hand drawn maps to expose the secret relationships between nation-states and global corporations. Her art practice incorporates imagination and fantasy, yet is grounded in detailed investigations of global systems of power and finance. In responding she suggested that I refer to Bratich specifically.[115] She states that the term *conspiracy theory* is often used as a dismissal of legitimate views. Treister is discussed more fully in Chapters 3 and 4.

Ambient fear is a term coined by Nikos Papastergiadis, Professor in the School of Culture and Communication at the University of Melbourne, in his *Cosmopolitanism and Culture,* which he uses to refer to "a kind of dread that has become so widespread that its sources appear to be both un-locatable and ubiquitous."[116] *Ambient fear* has particular application to a post-9/11 world where the enemy may be perceived as close at hand yet still invisible. This term is of benefit to an understanding of other key themes of this thesis, namely irrational fear—the perception that we can no longer know the source of our deepest fears as the enemy remains anonymous. This then produces a paranoid and compliant population that allows exceptional laws to be enacted: "that trust is lost as we imagine an infinite

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[113] Ibid. 4

[114] from Rancière's use of dissensus

[115] In a series of email interviews that I conducted between 2012-13 Treister argued that her own extensive research was too readily dismissed as a conspiracy. She argued: "Calling a person a 'conspiracy theorist' is an easy way to dismiss what used to be called "an investigative journalist" as if they are fringe, wacko, loopy or insane". She stated that even though the style that she presented her research had a graphical imaginative aspect, that all the mappings of global events were based in good research.

[116] Nikos Papastergiadis, *Cosmopolitanism and Culture* (Cambridge ; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2012). 22

network of terrorists, inciting heightened levels of irrational fear; and finally resulting in systems of governance that appear complex and contradictory."[117]

The term *image* is used throughout this thesis in multiple forms. The image now exists in a digital universe where the work of the artist, media and cinema converge as data. The digital image is seen by artists as central to the production, documentation and representation of artwork. As such, the digital image can now function as the *object* (as much as a painting does) for artists working with video art forms or in CGI graphics. The image then forms links to other digitally engaged media and social media forms. An expanded meaning for 'image' is necessary for understanding contemporary art practice and the image's relationship with other media forms of the 21st century. The meanings of the term *image* are now not simply limited to referring to only a two-dimensional recollection of a three-dimensional original or subject.

David Joselit, in *After Art*, proposes a re-definition of the image, while recognising any explanation would be "a slippery one".[118] He re-defines the image as being any form of digital data file, no matter what format it takes. In other words, the image:

> Indicates a quantum of visual content (say a digital photograph) that can assume a variety of formats. For instance, any digital photograph may remain a computer file, or be printed in a variety of ways on a variety of surfaces; it lends itself to editing with software like Photoshop, and it can be degraded in quality by emailing or uploading it. In short, an image is a visual byte, vulnerable to virtually infinite remediation.[119]

Since the 1990s, digital technologies have allowed the possibility for artworks in various forms to be transposed into, a multitude of file formats: an image file (jpeg, gif, or tiff); an audio or video file (mp3, mp4 etc); a data file or even motion graphic 3-D file. The image, in one of its multiple forms, is now able to enter into circulation in heterogeneous networks as a data file. The image enters into mass circulation of

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[117] Nikos Papastergiadis, "Aesthetics and Politics in the Age of Ambient Spectacles," *Broadshheet* 39 (2010). 33

[118] Professor in the Art History Department of the CUNY Graduate Center. David Joselit, *After Art*, Point (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013). xv. A swarm is used here as a multitude.
[119] Ibid.

'being everywhere at once' rather 'being in a singular place' results what he refers to as a swarm.[120]

Joselit uses a broad interpretation of the artistic image in order to acknowledge and conceptualise the emerging digital forms that visual art can take. The image can now exist across technological platforms. Joselit further argues that images have a scalable and transformative nature. They shift from two to three dimensions as 2-D or 3-D renderings from one material substance to another, as material forms, and from one file format to another. They also have a power and currency in their reproduction. Yet this scaling and proliferation of images and "the speed at which they travel has never been greater. Under these conditions, images appear to be free."[121] Joselit argues further that the image in art now be assigned a value as a kind of commodity.

> In the 1990s a second type of universal translator gained prominence: digital technologies with the capacity to transpose any work in sound, image, or text into numerical sequences-into code. Contemporary art and architecture are produced at the intersection of these two universal translators--one that specifies value, and the other that specifies form.[122]

Berlin-based artist and writer Hito Steyerl also reflects on the contemporary nature of the image in a series of essays titled *The Wretched of the Screen*.[123] In the first essay in the series, "In Free Fall: A Thought Experiment on Vertical Perspective," she regards the contemporary digital image as a confluence of many forms.[124] The digital image is able to move from screen to screen, from mobile phone to YouTube, then perhaps integrate into social media and even re-emerge as a news item. In another essay in this series, titled "In Defense of the Poor Image," Steyerl goes so far as to imply that the image now is constantly being reformed or re-imagined:

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[120] Ibid. xv, 2.
[121] Ibid. xvi
[122] Ibid. 2-3

[123] Hito Steyerl and Franco Berardi, *The Wretched of the Screen* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012).
[124] Hito Steyerl, "In Free Fall: A Thought Experiment on Vertical Perspective," *e-flux*, no. Book, Whole (2012), http://www.e-flux.com/journal/in-free-fall-a-thought-experiment-on-vertical-perspective/. 13-30

> The poor image is a copy in motion. Its quality is bad […], it deteriorates. It is a ghost of an image, a preview, a thumbnail, an errant idea, an itinerant image distributed for free, squeezed through slow digital connections, compressed, reproduced, ripped, remixed, as well as copied and pasted into other channels of distribution.[125]

Finally, Rancière, in *The Future of the Image,* draws a relationship between the image and reality.[126] Rancière does not go as far as Baudrillard in arguing that media images are inherently lacking in meaning. Instead, Rancière argues that images are inherently imperfect and in a process of deterioration, thus is in agreement with Steyerl. Rancière does examine how the idea of the image is "tied up in the apocalyptic discourses of today's cultural climate" (that is, the discourse of irrational fear).[127] Yet he argues against Baudrillard's notion that the image is now devoid of meaning through its repetition as part of cycle of media.

The term *Other* has a strong relationship to key themes of this thesis, where the enemy is constructed through irrational fear in media and visual cultures. Theoretical discussions about the meaning and usage of the term *Other* are beset by diverse and wide-ranging arguments depending on the definitional, conceptual and philosophical approach taken. Since 9/11, notions of the Other have been popularly perceived as a return to the old fears about Muslims and Islam, however this contemporary manifestation is contingent on the historical relationship between Europe and the Arab or Jewish Other. Cultural theorist Steven Salaita, in *Beyond Orientalism and Islamophobia: 9/11, Anti-Arab Racism*, provides a useful background on the construction of both the Americans and Arabs globally as the prime Other since 9/11.[128] Salaita confirms that Arab Americans have evolved into "a highly visible community that either directly or indirectly affects … so-called culture wars, [and] foreign policy."[129] This religiously, culturally, and geographically diverse group "have been homogenized in various American discourses as an unstable Southern/Third World."[130]

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[125] "In Defense of the Poor Image," e-flux, http://www.e-flux.com/journal/in-defense-of-the-poor-image/.
[126] Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image* (London ; New York: Verso, 2007).
[127] Ibid. 1-3
[128] Steven Salaita, "Beyond Orientalism and Islamophobia: 9/11, Anti-Arab Racism, and the Mythos of National Pride," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 6, no. 2 (2006).
[129] Ibid. 245
[130] Ibid, 245-246.

The term Other has been interpreted by theorists such as Slavoj Žižek, and is one that undoubtedly has historical precedents before 9/11. Notions of the Other are applied to two main themes in this thesis: the representation of the 'enemy' within cinema and other emerging media forms, and the construction of irrational fear as part of the sovereign borders that serve to exclude the Other. A number of artists both evoke and respond to the notion of the Arab Other in this thesis. The Other has been invoked since 9/11 as evidence of Arab perfidy, allowing discourses of 'us' and 'them' to dominate both the media and political action. Following this, Baudrillard conceives of the Other as being very much central to the spectacle of 9/11.[131] Bradley Butterfield argues that Baudrillard evokes the spectacle, maintaining that the US as a "lone superpower conjures its own Other; by dominating the globe it creates global Resistance."[132]

Slavoj Žižek, in *The Borrowed Kettle,* extends on Baudrillard's position in arguing that there has been a direction to exclude the Other and agents from the "legitimate social body" in democracy.[133] He maintains that the legitimised State needs to excluded the Other in order to survive.[134] Žižek argues that the State achieves this by 'reigning-in' more ideological positions: "What we encounter here is the age old mantra about politics as the domain of the identifications, ideals [idealists and extremism] …towards which one should maintain a sceptical distance—political engagement …[which] turns us into fools."[135] To be included therefore is to seek within the democratic process an inner security, a trust you cannot find outside in this society of fear. It is the role of the Other in a society to maintain this balance.

Within postcolonial studies and cultural theory, the Other is generally referred to as the processes by which societies and groups exclude those whom they want to subordinate or who are seen as not fitting into their society. For example, Edward Said wrote in *Orientalism* of this construct by western societies to Other those people

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[131] Bradley Butterfield, "The Baudrillardian Symbolic, 9/11, and the War of Good and Evil," *Postmodern Culture* 13, no. 1 (2002).
[132] Ibid.
[133] S Žižek, *The Borrowed Kettle* (Verso, 2004). 90-92
[134] Ibid. 92
[135] Ibid. 103-105

in the 'Orient' (meaning non-Westerners) who they seek to control.[136] This is the basis of the film loop that forms part of my 2006 artwork *Scenario House*, compromised of a combination of media footage and locally shot narrative material. A central concern in this work is the mediation of the representation of irrational fear via the systematic production and display of news events. The imagining of 'others,' particularly of people of Muslim and Middle Eastern background, is represented in the footage as an implied violence and a sense that these 'others' are being watched for our protection.[137]

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[136] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, vol. Reprint with a new preface. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2003). 29. Said's theory of the Other has been the basis for postcolonialism is predominantly based on what he views as a false perception of the 'Orient' or the 'East' frequently fabricated by western explorers, poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and artists since Napoleon's occupation of Egypt in 1798.
[137] Gianni Ian Wise, "Scenario House" (UNSW, 2006). 6

b. Key theorists and artists investigated in *Paranoid Fixations*

This section contributes to the understanding of the relationship of key theorists and artists investigated to *Paranoid Fixations*. This is achieved through contextualisation to key themes in this thesis.

Jean Baudrillard was a French philosopher, cultural theorist, media theorist and political commentator. He is generally considered to be a post-structuralist from the Continental School of philosophy, and is central to this thesis for a number of reasons, firstly being that he considered meaning to be constructed through systems of signs working together. In particular, Baudrillard's position on the *hyperreality* of the image is fundamental to the core themes of this thesis. Baudrillard wrote a number of reflections following the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent War on Terror, which are examined and applied throughout this thesis.[138] Secondly, Baudrillard's work covered so many areas including consumption, the object, communication, the media, the virtual, terrorism, art and war. This is evident in the way he was able to write on media and cinema, while combining the disciplines of philosophy and contemporary media studies. Thirdly and importantly for me, an artist, is his ability to challenge accepted theoretical norms through provocation and irony. This aspect will be elaborated on in Chapter 1 and throughout this thesis.

Jacques Rancière, the second key theorist, is a French philosopher, critic, and political theorist. He contributes to this thesis in three interrelated ways. First, Rancière's development of the strategy of *dissensus* in art, cinema and indeed in any creative activity is applied to a variety of art practices in this thesis as a way to disrupt prevailing views. Dissensus, for Rancière, is defined as a break with the established order of consensus or accepted ways of perceiving, and as such attends to art and its relationship to the aesthetic and political realms. This is discussed further in the following chapter. Secondly, Rancière argues a clear position for art and the role of the image. For Rancière an image is never a solitary duplication of a reality but simply one link in a chain that constructs a sense of reality. He suggests that art can imagine other realities with other forms of common sense or dissensus.

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[138] Baudrillard, Turner, and Baudrillard.

As such, this is a process for destabilising the accepted chain of perception of the image, thus eschewing older models of political or aesthetic art practice.

Thirdly, Rancière reinterpreted art's relationship to politics through a re-evaluation of the nature of aesthetics. Through Rancière's notion of the aesthetic regime it can be maintained that while political and artistic autonomy may never quite converge, aesthetic acts in art can function in both the political and the artistic regime. Rancière is refreshing because of his rejection of the view that aesthetics and politics are autonomous regimes. He points out in *The Politics of Aesthetics* that while aesthetic and political aspects of an artwork may not quite converge, it is the movement from one to the other that is of most interest.[139] An apparently singular aspect of an artwork can be perceived politically as well as aesthetically. Take for example Hito Steyerl's film *November* (2004). Steyerl and her childhood friend Andrea Wolf were influenced by images of women from popular mainstream cinema. They attempted to shoot "their own feminist amateur movies." Wolf, as an adult, joined the "Kurdish PKK as a real fighter". After Wolf's death in war, Steyerl montaged fictional and 'real' martial art scenes, creating new, dissensual results.[140] Aesthetics and politics, according to Rancière, can form unexpected and useful relationships.

b.i. Artists and Theorists: the major themes of *Paranoid Fixations*

The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of the relevant theorists and artists for each of the four main themes of this thesis. Particular consideration will be given to their interrelationship. This overview will be developed in conjunction with a critique of my own art practice.

The first main theme, that of the *idée fixe*, importantly points to the title of the thesis: paranoid fixation. Paranoia is often defined as a tightly held view, where symbols become fixed in the public consciousness through media images. Here David Joselit, as elucidated in the Introduction, writes on the nature of the image and its ability to take multiple forms, suggesting the digital image is now repeated as a symbol of

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[139] Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics : The Distribution of the Sensible*, Pbk. ed. (London ; New York: Continuum, 2006). Introduction
[140] Sven Lütticken, "Autonomy as Aesthetic Practice," *Theory, Culture & Society* 31, no. 7-8 (2014).

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fixed fear throughout social and data networks.[141] Rancière and Baudrillard both contribute to this theme in revealing the role of the image and art object in the formation of the idée fixe. The art historian Claire Bishop develops Rancière's position on art and politics, and his call for art that values disruption from the normalisation implicit in the notion of the idée fixe.[142] The Berlin-based artist Sophie Ristelhueber produces images that subtly subvert the fixed view (idée fixe). Another approach to this theme is found in the artwork of Stephen Birch, an Australian artist whose practice drew upon mythological creatures and characters from his childhood, such as Spiderman, that tap into (our) repressed fears and fixed paranoias.

The theme *ambient fear* is a term coined by Nikos Papastergiadis to explain the contemporary 'ambience' of paranoia after 9/11.[143] In this sense Papastergiadis concurs with Baudrillard in his interpretation of the aftereffects of 9/11. If ambient fear has no definable enemy, then, as Baudrillard argues, the repetitive transmission of the 9/11 footage through countless television networks has had the effect of entangling us in an escalation of ambient fear. This cycle of irrational fear needs to be disrupted by a renewed understanding of the image. Trevor Paglen is an artist who re-imagines the image through strategies of investigative journalism.[144] Paglen explores the hidden aspects of US 'black sites' used in the War on Terror. He responds to the ambience of fear surrounding these sites through curiosity and dissensus. The other artist who is examined under this theme is the British artist Suzanne Treister, who over the last twenty years has being making hand-drawn maps, visualising the often secret relationships between states and global corporations.[145] Both of these artists engage with the aesthetics of secrecy. The third main artist under this theme is the filmmaker and installation artist Harun Farocki, whose work examines and reveals the relationship between transnational screen culture and the ambience of fear inherent in military and surveillance cultures.

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[141] Joselit. xx

[142] Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells : Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, 1st edition . ed. (London ; Brooklyn, NY: Verso Books, 2012). 26-28

[143] Papastergiadis., 33, 39

[144] Trevor Paglen, "Trevor Paglen - Six Landscapes - 131228 2300," ed. Kraftzitung (2013).

[145] Suzanne Treister, "Mtb (Military Training Base)," Suzanne Treister http://ensemble.va.com.au/Treister/MilitaryTrainingBases/MTB.html.

The construction of narratives of an 'Arab Other' following of 9/11 is a theme that is examined throughout this thesis.[146] For the US this era has been a period of deep suspicion and terror of its own history. Douglas Keller, in his reflections on Baudrillard, proposes that the Hollywood film industry has offered a way to rescue and construct another narrative—one that is more palatable—offering 'a way out' when the actual events are too difficult to face.[147] Two theorists, Joseph Massad (Professor of Modern Arab Politics) and Heba Y. Amin (Egyptian artist and researcher) support this in their reflections on the Arab Other in media and cinema. Further, the drama-documentary maker Adam Curtis subverts these narratives of irrational fear by adopting the stylistic and narrative techniques of 24-hour news cycles. His use of the deliberately agitprop techniques of Sergei Eisenstein's intellectual montage are in stark contrast to Rancière's notion of dialectical montage, which uses dissensus to offer a break from narratives of irrational fear. The Chilean-French filmmaker Raúl Ruiz, in using dialectical montage, provides strategies to investigate and disrupt these narratives. Ruiz achieves this through creation of 'baroque excess' and complexity in his films. These investigations support and illuminate the overall argument of this thesis.

The final theme investigates the transformation in the relationship between border and nation-state, where from the mid-twentieth century onwards we have seen borders being increasingly redefined and extended. This is explored through Stephen Graham's reading of Agamben's concept of *states of exception*, where he proposes that these transformations mean that zones or states are created that ignore the universal human rights of those regarded as symbolically Other, adopting Michel Foucault's model of the discipline society.[148] Two artists, Gregor Schneider and Javier Téllez, reflect on these complex issues of states of exception and borders in projects that include working with existing state borders and the creation of temporary fenced-off spaces. Tanja Ostojić performs as ''an itinerant and asylum

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[146] The term 'Arab Other' is used frequently in this thesis. It a contested term and requires qualifying. Undoubtedly Othering occurs for most minorities in xenophobic attitudes within the social space. This thesis equally is not implying that the majority of Israeli people support violence with regard to their Arab neighbours. In fact, there is ongoing non-violent opposition to this from within Israel.
[147] Douglas Kellner, "Baudrillard, Globalization and Terrorism: Some Comments in Recent Adventures of the Image and Spectable on the Occasion of Baudrillard's 75th Birthday," *Baudrillard Studies* 2, no. 1 (2005).
[148] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish : The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979). 11-13.

seeker,'' evoking the conditions of irrational fear experienced in illegal border crossings.[149] Hasan Elahi, a Bangladeshi migrant living in the US, conducts strategies of auto-surveillance following post-9/11 FBI monitoring, demonstrating Agamben's model of states of exception. This theme demonstrates, following Gilles Deleuze's model of a control society, that a globalised networked society has emerged. Two artists reflect on these conditions through interpreting the fear of control in the network society: Hito Steyerl and Richard Paglen. Steyerl is fascinated by the act of disappearance from the network, something that she explores through the use of mimicry and pretence in her work. For Paglen it means the simultaneous act of revealing yet maintaining the secrecy.

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[149] Ostojić met and spoke with me in 2008 in Berlin.

c. Chapter summaries

This thesis is divided into three parts. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the main theorists and their relative positions in the context of art and visual culture in this thesis. Chapters 2 and 3 focus on the intersection of cinema and the aesthetics of selected art practices. Chapters 4 and 5 concentrate on the politics of borders of the nation-state and their transition into networked global geographies of a control society.

Chapter 1, "Insights into the construction of paranoid view," provides a comparative explanation of Baudrillard and Rancière. Key to any discussion into the construction of a paranoid worldview is the contribution of Baudrillard, who has argued that within our media cycle there is now a collapse or implosion of the representation of events such as 9/11 into a hyperreality as media images. This implosion of media images becomes fixed in the public consciousness as a sign of irrational fear. Baudrillard argues that the image bares no relationship to the original and in fact replaces the event. In discussing the role of image in visual culture, Rancière provides an explanation of how dissensus contributes to and conflicts with Baudrillard's views on paranoia and media images, with a proposal for a form of agreement on their positions on media and art.

The following chapter, "Cinema and Terror," applies Baudrillard's view that the 9/11 media cycle and the resultant hyperreality of media images shows a paranoid fixation with the repetitious potential of disaster. In particular, that the construction of paranoia is shown to have prominence in cinema and television. It demonstrates this through the example of the Showtime television series *Homeland,* revealing the repetition of dominant narratives of state and social paranoia. It then presents counter-narratives that have been successfully formed in cinema and video art: the Central Conflict Theory of the director Raúl Ruiz; the art of montage in the drama-documentary works of Adam Curtis; the discursive approach of Harun Farocki; and examples from my own art practice. These models are explained through the various image and motion theories of Sergei Eisenstein, who brought to the screen the technical, aesthetic, and ideological potentials of montage.

In engaging with these themes of repetition and fixation on irrational fear, chapter 3 explores the term 'ambient fear,' coined by Nikos Papastergiadis to explain broader changes in our political culture, particularly following 9/11.[150] Ambient fear refers to the perception that we are surrounded by multiple risks but remain uncertain of the actual origin and true causes of the threat. Today these specific objects are quickly diffused and dispersed—fear has merged with the generalised condition of anxiety. Papastergiadis asserts that this threat has a presence yet the source remains difficult to define. After 9/11 the fear of the Other could not be contained within a single point or entity—instead, fear was now ambient; we struggle with a nameless and faceless enemy. This chapter is an attempt to disrupt the "strategies of capitalism/democracy" that exploit an ambience of social fear, through a discussion of the aesthetics of the "intimate enemy."[151]

Any understanding of relationship of irrational fear to the Other requires an investigation of the relationship of border to the nation-state. Michel Foucault's model of the discipline society and Giorgio Agamben's notion of a state of exception indicate the emergence of emerging zones or 'prisons' for the Other such as the detention centre. The chapter goes on to argue that the nation-state, as shown in the previous chapter's discussion on the television series *Homeland*, is increasingly the site of irrational fear. Chapter 4 then describes the transformations from the discipline society of the nation-state to the control society. However, where chapter 4 reflects on the nature of the shifting geographical borders of nation-states, the final chapter reveals the shifting indeterminate nature of the Internet. The final chapter proposes that since the rise of the Internet in the 1960s, a rapid transition has occurred, from a world of nation-states to one of networked global geographies. It argues that the shifting indeterminacy of the network, has a clear relationship with the flows of capital, digital culture, the real, the virtual and irrational fear. Two key themes emerge: the issues of identity and security as demonstrated in an analysis of the former NSA contractor Edward Snowden and WikiLeaks's Julian Assange; and the proliferation of manipulated and degraded images on multiple networks. The ambiguous nature of the degraded digital image is revealed through an

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[150] Nikos Papastergiadis, *Ambient Fears* (2008).
[151] Nikos Papastergiadis, "Dictionary of War - Ambient Fears," http://dictionaryofwar.org/.

understanding of Hito Steyerl's films and essays. Steyerl also serves to examine the role of artistic estrangement through an act of disappearance from the network. Estrangement and autonomy are seen to reflect both exhaustion from the flow of world events and a deep suspicion that the network is no longer open and free as imagined.

d. Living in Chile as a foundation for a political art practice

This section provides a contextualisation of the thesis in relation to the development of my art practice, in particular a significant period spent living in Santiago, the capital of Chile following the completion of art school in Sydney. This study provides an understanding of my own motives for undertaking this thesis. There are three reasons for this. First, by living there I became more informed in the politics of irrational fear, which the military regime used to maintain absolute power. Second, I experienced first-hand the deep anxiety and a subsequent paranoia that many of its citizens had developed under the military-backed regime. Lastly, the experience contributed to my decision to pursue a political art practice. For the reader this survey could assist as a case study of the relationship between artistic practice, power and military oppression. The account that follows has been synthesised from personal diaries at the time, two short published essays,[152] and historical records translated from Spanish as well as theorists such as the Chilean artist and writer Lotty Rosenfeld[153] who represented Chile at the 56th Venice Biennale in 2015.[154] In dealing with this synthesis, I have chosen to adopt an experimental mode of written expression in parts of this section.[155]

Following my graduation in 1987 in undergraduate studies in visual art at UNSW Art & Design (College of Fine Arts) in Sydney, Australia, I moved to Santiago de Chile

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[152] Gianni Ian Wise, "Una Nación Y Cultura Que Irrumpe (a Nation and Culture Broken)," *Nuestra América Jóven (Our Young America)*1995.

[153] Nelly Richard, "Poéticas De La Disidencia | Poetics of Dissent: Paz Errázuriz " Consejo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes, http://bienalvenecia.cl.

[154] Luz, "56th Biennale of Venice: All the World's Futures. Short Guide," (Venice: Biennale of Venice, 2015).

[155] In effect some of this content operates as a parallel text to the accompanying thesis; this account is itself an artefact, or a system of parallel text. Nigel Krauth, "Evolution of the Exegesis: The Radical Trajectory of the Creative Writing Doctorate in Australia," *TEXT: Journal of Writing and Writing Courses* 15, no. 1 (2011).

with my partner where we lived for approximately four years. The year of 1987 coincided with the final period of Augusto Pinochet's military regime in Chile.[156] My expatriate Chilean partner, who had left Chile previously as a political refugee to live in Sydney, Australia, had warned me that I needed to be careful of how I spoke and interacted with police or military who were visible throughout the city. This warning and subsequent situations I encountered contributed to the level of anxiety that I experienced during the years I lived there.[157] At the time of my arrival I had minimal understanding of the country's particular social and political conditions. I had begun to encounter conditions that were outside my limited social and political experience.

Chile had at that stage spent approximately sixteen years under a military rule following the military coup d'état of September 11, 1973. The military junta began with the brutal repression of all the political and social sectors that had supported the deposed first socialist democratic government under President Salvador Allende. His Popular Unity party had formed a coalition to gain power under a mandate of land reform and nationalisation of resources in 1970. This was the first in a series of coups throughout Latin America, where the military brutally suppressed all dissent. Many thousands of Chileans were imprisoned, tortured and killed by the security forces. The unprecedented degree of violence used by the armed forces generated a deep sense of terror among ex-supporters of the previous government.[158] This became apparent in my interaction with the family I lived with, who had been involved with both the previous socialist government and with student political groups.

While living and producing artwork in Santiago, I began to see a relationship between art and some form of political engagement in my practice. Within the social conditions of this dictatorship I began to comprehend the anxiety and subsequent

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[156] Sun Axelsson, Birgitta Leander, and Raúl Silva C, *Evidence on the Terror in Chile* (London: Merlin Press, 1974). This is a definitive report detailing the methods and most importantly motives for torture during the regime of Pinochet in Chile over the 17 years of dictatorship.

[157] A number of situations arose during my time in Santiago relating to the Pinochet regime. Briefly these included amongst other experiences: being caught up in water cannon and tear gas actions during demonstrations; being beaten by paramilitary; witnessing death at first hand; dealing with victims of torture within the family; having to contend with the presence of military aggression in public spaces; being amongst social deprivation; brutalisations and activism etc.

[158] Verónica Valdivia Ortiz De Zárate, "Terrorism and Political Violence During the Pinochet Years: Chile, 1973-1989," *Radical History Review* 85, no. 1 (2003).

paranoia that many of its citizens had developed under the military-backed regime. This understanding deepened primarily due to my friendship to my partner's brother Gonzalo, an artist who created connections for me with a number of artists groups including CADA (Collective Art Actions or *Colectivo Acciones de Arte*).[159] I also had formed a brief relationship with an artist group who studied at the Academy of Fine Arts of Chile, Pontifical Catholic University of Chile (Spanish: *Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile*). At one point I experimented with the AJP (Association of Young Visual Artists or *Asociacion de Plasticos Jovenes*), who produced a broad spectrum of public art, ranging from installations to street-art.[160] Due to the explosive nature of their political activities, my involvement was limited. Yet my levels of anxiety were notable, particularly while being involved with a political wall mural with a group of local artists. A recollection taken from a diary entry at the time is revealing:

> Artists work a lot more as groups (in Santiago) - informally through collaborative work and formally through artist groups like APJ (young artist group) who specifically targeted the *poblaciones* (shanty towns) - through overnight actions like graffiti and murals that go up fast… the group CADA instigated direct intervention through art actions like cleaning the bordellos in the red light district. … they had to be well orchestrated because of the regime had a private militia, funded out of junta money, … beating up any 'communists' or 'subversive elements'…. Gonzalo decided to get me along one night, just to give me a taste of what was happening - We'd have 10 minutes to get it all done. They had a cartoon drawn on a huge sheet of paper and we each had a colour (except for the person on watch…. Out by micro (local bus) to a rough wall on the sidestreet…. By the time we started I felt 'protected' by all these guys who looked in control of everything. Every little sound, I remember, made me react.

The junta employed a number of restrictions that affected artistic and other cultural activities including theatre, performance, cinema and literature. These restrictions had the effect of marginalising most forms of dissent. The intention was to sever ties with the previous socialist democratic government of Salvador Allende and the past

[159] Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics, "Cada (Colectivo Acciones De Arte)," http://hemisphericinstitute.org/hemi/en/modules/itemlist/category/100-cada.
[160] Nelly Richard, "Margins and Institutions : Art in Chile since 1973," *Art & Text* 21, no. May - July 1986 (1986). 23.

in the form of erasure of memory and anxiety. Keeping the meaning of any future cultural production tightly controlled through secret police and surveillance was an expedient way to eliminate representation of the past.[161] This resulted in a compliant, paranoid artistic and literary population who readily took on various modes of self-censorship, including avoiding all contact with political groups and presenting theatre productions that complied with the junta's views. Censorship was apparently varied at the whim of secret police or government officials. Situations existed where one artist was arrested while others were not. Self-censorship then developed as a form of panoptic control. Boundaries between what was allowed and what was not were variable and ultimately unpredictably arbitrary. These themes will be explored in the wider sense in Chapter 3 under theme of ambient fear and in Chapter 4 under the theme of art and surveillance.

Figure 11. Gianni Wise, *Condorito-saporio* (still), 1995

Reproduced Gianni Wise. http://www.gianniwise.com/index.php/pre-2000/in-santiago/, accessed 18 March 2015

According to Nelly Richard theatre in Santiago was the most suppressed form of cultural activity. On the other hand, artists with international reputations taken on by more traditional European-style galleries were less affected arguably because they were not perceived to be a threat. These were encouraged as a sign of the cultural

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[161] Salvador Allende is often referred to as the first democratically elected socialist president in world history. The period of his rule in Chile between 1970 and 1973 witnessed an attempt to construct a "Chilean path toward socialism.

maturity of the military regime. In contrast, any dissident display such as public art was suppressed. Art actions were suppressed possibly as a result of their public nature, whereas official gallery and museum art was containable within the walls of the institution. It was perceived as being part of a European cultural tradition–earning the regime respect. Cinema, and documentary forms were suppressed because of the potential reach of their audience internationally.

Art groups such as CADA (Figure 10) realised these forms of suppression of the creative voice and censorship needed countering through public actions. CADA, and other art collectives, saw the need to conduct highly visible public actions to raise public awareness by the suppression of cultural and intellectual activity by the regime. For example, Lotty Rosenfeld, a CADA member, 'drew' crosses in multiple public spaces in Santiago streets, the Atacama Desert in Northern Chile, and following her exile, in front of the White House in Washington.[162] The work, titled *A thousand crosses on roads*[163] (figure 12), could be interpreted as an assertion against both the invisibility of the artist and the silencing of the common voice.[164]

Figure 12. Lotty Rosenfeld, *milla de cruces sobre el pavimento*, 1979, 2001

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[162] A version of this work was presented at the Chilean Pavilion at the 56th Venice Biennale: Lotty Rosenfeld, "Chilean Pavilion at the 56th Venice Biennale," review of Biennale national pavilion, *Artsy* (2015).

[163] *A Thousand Crosses on the Road. Santiago, Chile, 1979,* 1979, 2009. site specific action, variable.

[164] Richard, "Margins and Institutions : Art in Chile since 1973." 57-60.

Chile was a population kept in state of absolute fear—unnecessary fear—through the use of curfews, street patrols, random house checks, guns and military parades. Curfews were announced through the government radio stations. If roving paramilitary death squads caught you, you could be shot. CADA realised that fear and isolation within poorer communities under the curfews and suppression of the regime needed addressing. *Para no morir de hambre en el arte* (For not dying of starvation in art) was an art action developed by CADA in response to this (figure 13).[165] It was seen as shaping new socially engaged relations with poor communities through the distribution of half-litres of milk to those living in a number of shantytowns around Santiago. CADA performed these art actions as a necessary social practice, one that eradicated the traditional distance between the artist and the spectator.

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[165] Lotty Rosenfeld, "Para No Morir De Hambre En El Arte," http://hidvl.nyu.edu/video/003180907.html.

Figure 13. CADA, *Para no morir de hambre en el arte*, 1979-85

While these art actions were important, what became evident for me was that many citizens living under these oppressive conditions had developed private and public personas. This meant that thoughts, plans and actions were only expressed privately. There was a hyper-awareness and suspicion of others. Speaking out could end in disappearances into the torture centres located close to the centre of the city. Uncertainty and a deep fear of authority pervaded the population. Critically, there was the realisation of a loss of an independently functioning self within this overtly paranoid society. The psychological impact of never knowing when you might receive a door knock, or whether you were being watched, had a noticeable psychological impact on the people I knew. These conditions had a panoptic effect on those involved with cultural production. Artists became more inclined to self-regulation. The military did not have to take direct action. One act of suppression had an accumulative self- regulating effect on other art and theatre practitioners.

When the 'airmail paintings' (figure 14) of Eugenio Dittborn were first shown at Artspace in 1986, aspects of creators' social paranoia and trauma were evident in the work.[166] These are large, folded works that had been mailed from Chile towards the end of the dictatorship. Dittborn uses a technique of reprinting, overlaying images, text and news clippings with the effect of recalling the memory of obsessive encounters of those living under this regime. Desa Philippi, in her interview with Dittborn, observed that these works had been mailed or removed from their context, as were those citizens forced by the junta to vacate their homes. "How can we articulate visual pleasure when it is so closely bound up with the transitory, this ceaseless oscillation between the mirage of identity and the non-identical?" asks Philippi.[167] These and other potent works of this period evoke the loss for many Chileans following the overthrow of the Allende socialist democracy. It meant not only the imprisonment or exile of many artists and intellectuals but also the demolishing of art and university institutions that had supported most of the development of artistic practice in the country.

Figure 14. Eugenio Dittborn, *The Bristles of The Brushes, Airmail Painting No. 176*, 1986

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[166] Desa Philippi, "Distance of Memory: The Airmail Paintings of Eugenio Dittborn," *Parachute: Contemporary Art Magazine* 83 (1996).
[167] "Distance of Memory: The Airmail Paintings of Eugenio Dittborn," *Parachute* (1996). 1.

Two distinct and ultimately oppositional forms of art began emerging in Chile in the last decade of the regime: the official, institutionally accepted art of organisations such as the *Escena de Avanzada* (or Advanced Scene),[168] and the unofficial street actions of groups such as APJ described previously.[169] A number of artists involved in *Escena de Avanzada* have developed international practices since include Alfredo Jaar, Carlos Leppe, Eugenio Dittborn.[170]

My own art practice towards the end of living in Chile had evolved into two distinct forms, divided between my participation within a semi-collective of young artists and the work I produced as an individual artist. In summary, the collective I was mainly engaged with was the APJ, who specifically worked within the shantytowns and poorer areas of Santiago.[171] Alberto Díaz Parra, in his recollection of the group APJ, records their diverse engagement as a collective: their use of alternative spaces; use of graphics; installation; art actions and large-scale murals.[172] They encouraged the participation of artists, students, and adolescents (figure 15).

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[168] trans: *Advance Scene* in Richard, "Margins and Institutions : Art in Chile since 1973." 86-89.
[169] APJ: *Asociacion de Plasticos Jovenes* or Association of Young Visual Artists
[170] Artists such as Eugenio Dittborn and Alfredo Jaar, as well as the increasing use of new technologies like audio work in fundamental experiences, such as those carried out by Juan Downey - photography, body art, happenings and overall performances, which reached a high degree of development in artists like Carlos Leppe, Lotty Rosenfeld and Catalina Parra.

[172] Alberto Díaz Parra, "Muralismo," Colectivo Luis Emilio Recabarren, http://luisemiliorecabarren.cl/?q=node/190.

Figure 15. Gianni Wise*, APJ, Street mural*, 1990

Reproduced: Gianni Wise, accessed August 14, 2014

As an individual artist, my first main project was commenced while still living in Santiago. This project was a short experimental film, which I edited after leaving Chile, titled *Condorito-saporio.*[173] The completed production was shown at the *Viña del Mar Film Festival* in Chile.[174] The footage for the film was shot from a hired taxi in the centre of Santiago, using a small 16 mm camera, recording 'subjects' at random as they were heading into bars in the evening. I was attempting to mimic personal surveillance using the camera as the observer (figures 16 and 17). This project is explored further in Chapter 2.

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[173] Gianni Wise, "Condorito-Saporio," (Sydney: Gianni Wise, 1995).
[174] Festival de Cine de Viña del Mar, "Viña Del Mar Film Festival," Consejo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes http://www.cinevina.cl.

Figure 16. Gianni Wise, *Condorito-saporio*, 1995

Reproduced Gianni Wise. http://www.gianniwise.com/index.php/pre-2000/in-santiago/, accessed 18 March 2015

Figure 17. Gianni Wise, *Condorito-saporio*, 1995

Reproduced Gianni Wise. http://www.gianniwise.com/index.php/pre-2000/in-santiago/, accessed 18 March 2015

e. My more recent art practice

Following our return to Sydney via Buenos Aires and Paris, I recognised two aspects to my time in Chile that have influenced my research and artistic practice. Firstly, I began to notice a clear disconnection from the events occurring in Chile. Arguably this was due to the geographical distance, a lack of connection to those in Chile, and the disinterest shown by the news media here in Australia in relation to the situation in Latin America. My desire to return to some level of intimate engagement, even a return to the insecurity of life under the regime of Pinochet, was not possible. I found that my own relationship to my experience in Chile seemed to have acquired a decreasing sense of reality. Yet as an artist I was able to still engage with my lived experience in Chile, and I began to investigate some of the social and political experiences of my time in Chile through two projects in particular.

The first was the editing of the short experimental film Condorito-saporio.[175] I was able to incorporate experimental VHS footage into the original telecined footage taken in Chile to produce a 12 minute, semi-narrative video work. The production involved mimicking the surveillance of individuals by secret police, who were frequently seen travelling in unmarked American vehicles throughout Santiago at the time that I was living there. The resulting film was part documentary and part imagined. Yet my intention was not to purely collapse the distinction between fiction and nonfiction. Instead, I wanted to place these two aspects in a dynamic tension that amplified their relationship to my experiences of irrational fear and trauma. My intention was to 'act out' the effects of physical surveillance as an imagined and heightened experience. This complex relationship between event and fiction has parallels with the work of Walid Raad in his work with the Atlas Group, in which he documented the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1991).[176] Raad, born in Lebanon but now based in New York and Beirut, archived notebooks and films produced by Dr Fakhouri, a supposed founding member of the foundation named the Atlas Group.[177] In reality, there was no such person as Dr Fakhouri, nor a real foundation.

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[175] Wise, "Condorito-Saporio." (trans: Little Condor of the Andes as secret policeman)
[176] Alan Gilbert, "Walid Raad (Re)Invents the Archive," (Millerton: Aperture, Incorporated, 2010). 63-64.
[177] Fadl Fakhouri, "The Atlas Group," *Multitudes*, no. 1 (2004).

The completed production of *Condorito-saporio* was screened at the Viña del Mar Film Festival in Chile (1995), at the Festival Huefonos in Argentina (2000), and in a re-edited form at the Adelaide Fringe Festival in 2002. As an artist I was becoming increasingly conscious of the role video art and film could have in re-imagining and understanding the construction of irrational fear. Through the re-enactment of the surveillance of individuals in *Condorito-saporio* I had begun to develop a visual language through which I could comprehend and explore social anxiety and irrational fear. This is a key theme for this thesis. As an example, figure 18 is a still from the film, showing a shot through a window of a bar at night. Here the camera is the panoptic device that functions as the eye of the secret police or security camera. My artwork became increasingly engaged with exploring the dynamics between watching and being watched.

Figure 18. Gianni Wise, *Condorito-saporio* (still), 1995

Reproduced Gianni Wise. http://www.gianniwise.com/index.php/pre-2000/in-santiago/, accessed 18 March 2015

The second notable art project was my installation work *Decaptioned,*[178] shown as part of the curated exhibition *Disaster Tourism,* along with works by Suzanne

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[178] Gianni Wise, *Decaptioned,* 2001. Installation exhibition, 2.4m x 0.8m x 0.3m. Gianni Wise.

Treister Bronia Iwanczak and Philipa Veitch (figure 19).[179] *Decaptioned* consisted of shelving containing a collection of folders similar to those used by Chilean military government's court system. The folders contained a mix of copies of released files from negotiations between Henry Kissinger and the Chilean secret police, as well as redacted surveillance files that the Chilean secret police maintained (figure 20). These were interspersed with excerpts from my own personal diaries. Below the shelf were piles of paper-wrapped packages of indistinct purpose. The gallery audience was invited to browse through the folders, and perhaps enact the role of a security or surveillance officer. In a review in the art journal *Broadsheet*, Alex Gawronski proposed that:

> The work therefore evinces a sense of direct exposure to the disasters of political tyranny. At the same time Wise evokes in his accounts a decidedly self-deprecating humour. The artist recounts attempts to master Spanish while approximating first-hand the full extent of the political destruction wreaked by Pinochet's regime[180]

Significant to this thesis is firstly that this work explores an aspect of human surveillance through the ubiquitous use of techniques, from wire-tapping to more recent dataveillance technologies. Second, it demonstrates the use of citizen documentation as a mechanism of silencing and control. It is noted by Jairus Grove in a paper presented at "The Horror of Security: Contemporary Geopolitics in a Permanent Beta Phase" titled "The Horror of Security: Introduction," that records maintained by the political Stasi secret service of the now-defunct German Democratic Republic were not primarily maintained for any information they contained but as means of maintaining a paranoid and compliant population.[181] These themes are explored further in Chapter 4.

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179 Suzanne Treister Bronia Iwanczak, Philipa Veitch, Gianni Wise, *Disaster Tourism,* 2001. Curated exhibition
180 Alex Gawronski, "The Art of Living Dangerously," *Broadsheet: a journal of contemporary art* 10, no. Journal, Electronic (2001).
181 Jairus Victor Grove. 2-4

Figure 19. Gianni Wise, *Decaptioned* (detail), 2001

Reproduced Gianni Wise, http://www.gianniwise.com/index.php/2000-5/disaster-tourism/, accessed 18 March 2015

Figure 20. Gianni Wise *Decaptioned* (graphic detail), 2001

Reproduced NSA, *Chile and the United States: Declassified Documents Relating to the Military Coup, September 11, 1973*, http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB8/nsaebb8i.htm, accessed 18 March 2015

A later work, *Scenario House* (2006), was an installation comprising a room within

the exhibition space of a gallery.[182] This room was specifically constructed as imaginary space within the 'suburban heartland'—the home—alluding to the commonly used expression: 'homeland security.' The room sheet for the exhibition states:

> The room *Scenario House* offers a dual viewing perspective where the participant can either enter via the doorway or choose to peer into the space through two windows at the end of the room (figure 21). These windows also double as shooter hatches in a gun shooting club facility. A participant enters the room via the door at the side, into a space that contains a gunshots audio track. They would then find themselves in a room containing a lounge setting and walls completely wallpapered in the repetitive yet discrete motif of gun targets (figure 21). The participant at the window is encouraged to imagine themselves as willing participants in a gun club activity. They see through a window into a long room that resembles the domestic space of a living room whilst incorporating elements of an indoor shooting facility. Simulated gun club targets are visible at the end of the space and the sound of gunshots creates a more immersive effect within this simulated environment.[183]

A television monitor is mounted into the wall (figures 22 and 23), playing a looped digital video work.[184] It is a montage of television news footage and specifically shot dramatic action sequences, edited into an ongoing narrative. The shooting was:

> … primarily in the outer western suburbs of Sydney. Much of the street shots were obtained by filming while being driven around in the back of a station wagon though main street shopping strips…. The close-ups were achieved with a telephoto lens. The filming took the form of a semi-documentary having a controlled observational mode. … There was a natural, uninterrupted raw quality in the footage. There was little opportunity for retakes. Sudden changes in existing lighting and out of focus footage was common. The intention in shooting in this way was to construct an effect reminiscent of television news reportage.[185]

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[182] Gianni Wise, *Scenario House,* 2006. Exhibition variable.
[183] "Scenario House," ed. UNSW College of Fine Arts (Sydney2006).
[184] The video loop was developed further through re-editing and further montaging to be shown at the Centre for Contemporary Photography (2009)
[185] Wise. 17-21.

The found footage was an exploration of violence through the manifestation of post-9/11 vengeance scenarios. The video production reflected on how borders distinguishing gaming violence, television violence and revenge scenarios are becoming increasingly indefinable. Interestingly, there has subsequently been an increasing adoption by groups such as ISIL of social media and media sharing platforms such as YouTube as propaganda tools.[186] This convergence of new media forms and propaganda is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.[187]

Figure 21. Gianni Wise, *Scenario House*, 2006

Reproduced Gianni Wise, http://www.gianniwise.com/index.php/artwork/scenario-house/, accessed 18 March 2015

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[186] Maya Gebeily, "How Isil Is Gaming the World's Journalists," *Global Post* 25 (2014).
[187] James P Farwell, "The Media Strategy of Isis," *Survival* 56, no. 6 (2014). 52.

Figure 22. Gianni Wise, *Scenario House* (installation shot), 2006

Reproduced Gianni Wise, http://www.gianniwise.com/index.php/artwork/scenario-house/, accessed 18 March 2015

Figure 23. Gianni Wise, *Scenario House* (installation view), 2006

Reproduced Gianni Wise, http://www.gianniwise.com/index.php/artwork/scenario-house/, accessed 18 March 2015

f. PhD exam exhibition component

Exhibition title: *Data Retention II*

Date of exhibition: 1-3 December 2016

Exhibition space: SCA Galleries, Sydney College of the Arts

See mp3 looped audio (*data-retention-audio-loop.mp3*) and the video documentation with sound (*data retention II-video.mov.*)

Figure 24. Gianni Wise, *Data Retention II* (installation view), 2016

Reproduced Ian Hobbs. Computer server racks, computer servers, Ethernet cabling, tie wire, LED lighting, fluorescent tubes, perfect bound books, engraved aluminium panel, looped audio.

The exhibition component of this thesis comprises a multi-part installation and an audio sound track (see Appendix B for further images and detail). Central to the work is a 'data retention' room containing data storage servers mounted in recently decommissioned computer server racks. Entangled with nearly one kilometre of Ethernet cabling, the installation intentionally implies a hybrid location of data storage enmeshed in globalised networks of data. The intentional choice of an enclosed gallery space affected an ambience of anxiety stemming from an unknowing sense-diffused fear.[188][189]

The enclosed space was easily converted into a site resembling a computer server room. I achieved this transformation from a 'white cube' gallery space to a more utilitarian space by deliberately propping neon lighting against the walls and by

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[188] Anxiety is not used here in the way that an artwork is critiqued as having a disquiet effect, or even in describing confusion induced by an art object or project. Here anxiety is used as describing a tendency towards irrational fear. This anxious 'intimate enemy' creates and sustains a state of perpetual anxiety—one where symbolic terror no longer takes the form of a clear target.

[189] A video documentation of the installation is downloadable as *data retention II-video.mov.*

painting the rear wall a utilitarian grey (figure 25). The neon lighting acted to silhouette the dark vertical computer racks against the neutrality techno-functionality of the rear wall. Containing *Data Retention II* within this theatrical space meant that it resided simultaneously within the gallery and somewhere outside of time–perhaps in a data storage centre such as in New York's Titanpointe building or one of the global network of Google data centres. Data centres such as these are able to function as enclaves for extra-territorial, exceptional activities. I discuss in Chapter 4 how under certain conditions states create exceptions to the rule of law–where the inconsistency of the law can permit, for example, be suspended in a state of emergency. These exceptions particularly function in times of deep suspicion. Examples include the activities of the NSA within its data centres in New York which, since 9/11, have been legal empowerment permitting acts of national citizen surveillance, or even torture.

Figure 25. Gianni Wise, *Data Retention II* (installation view), 2016

Reproduced Ian Hobbs. Computer server racks, computer servers, Ethernet cabling, tie wire, LED lighting, fluorescent tubes, perfect bound books, engraved aluminium panel, looped audio.
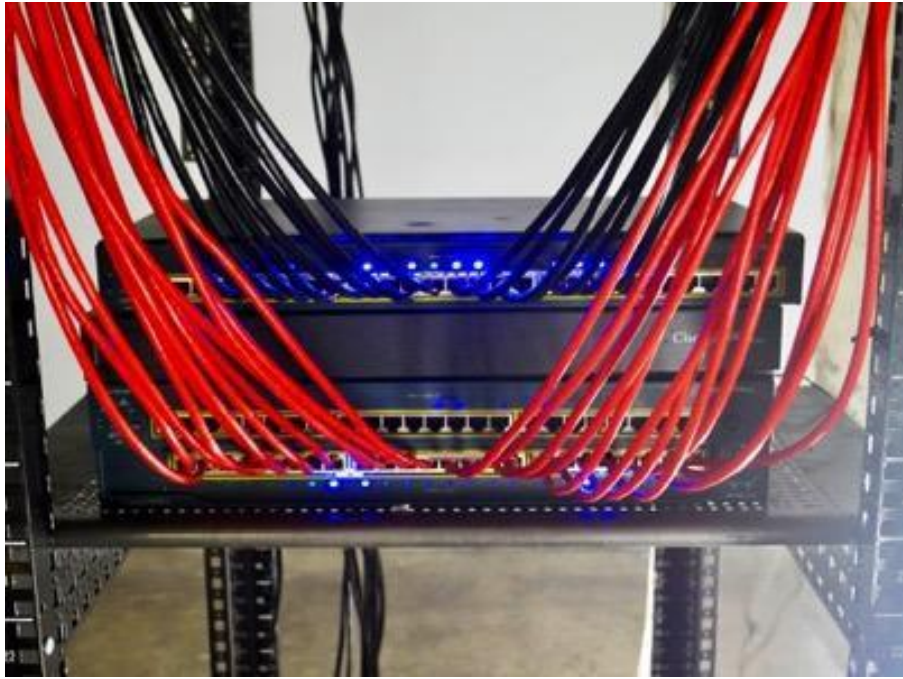
Figure 26. Gianni Wise, *Data Retention II* (detail), 2016

Reproduced Ian Hobbs. Computer server racks, computer servers, Ethernet cabling, tie wire, LED lighting, looped audio.

The interwoven cabling with the server racks and computer components acts as a trope for the almost silent activity of data transmission, where server-machines absorb massive flows of human information (figure 26). This machinic-architecture functions as a 'library-cum-cyberspace'. It is both a library of data retained and as cyberspace–where data collection and dataveillance interlaces and ensnares human data. The cabling forms a web-like latticework through and between dark vertical server racks. During the installation I recognised that the inherent materiality and organisation of cables had become semi-accidentally aestheticised due to the need to keep the bundles of cables neat, organised and manageable. Aesthetically there was an increasing tension between my desire to make the cables neat and to allow them to break free from the restrictive, anxious space that the frames dictated, allowing them droop and stretch–winding their way out of the racks and hard drives, intertwining neuroweb-like, throughout the room.

As my communication with the cables developed I began to envisage more theatrical possibilities for cables to be suspended and even break through the walls and ceiling implying that this library-cum-cyberspace was not confinable to the gallery. Yet extending the reach of data collection and dataveillance beyond the confines of the

physical data room ensnares individuals moving in algorithmic environments through devices like smartphones or image data digitally linked to massive data collecting programs. The random rhythms of the cables suggested something more sinister–something reflecting our deepening anxieties. The sinister aspects of the cables is amplified by the pulsating LED lighting the audio track pulsating through speakers mounted above and behind the installation (figure 30).[190]

Along the left wall the viewer's gaze rests on neat, vertical 'grids' of interconnected objects which from a distance defied immediate identification (figure 27). Closer inspection reveals sixty identical perfect bound books, supported by semi-visible shelving, mounted from ceiling to floor. Each identical book has the weight and quality of a large, thick paperback without text or images (figure 27). Ethernet cabling links the books to other elements of the installation (figure 24). The Ethernet wiring continues across the room to the other two components, filling the space. This emanation of cabling from the books implies objects of a physical world in transfiguration, from solid form to immaterial/material data. Wires hum, vibrating as signals and data escaped, forming networks from book to object. Finally, these solid objects (books) transmute into pure data cabling. Investigating the work more closely indicates that data may or may not be contained within each volume, in a system where interconnected volumes symbolise the visible and invisible traces of records maintained, of data kept. These components provoke an ambience of fear as sinister 'packages' of ambiguously wired devices–indicate the mind's desire to invent 'paranoid' connections where there are none–or even as some preemptive techno-military apparatus. The ambiguously of wired devices leave the viewer with a level of anxious uncertainty. A number of viewers actually were not certain as whether they functioned or not. This anxious state relating to data is introduced further in as ambient fear in Chapter 3.

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[190] Listen to the mp3 looped audio titled *data-retention-audio-loop.mp3.*

Figure 27. Gianni Wise, *Data Retention II* (detail), 2016

Reproduced Ian Hobbs. Perfect bound books, vertical shelving, Ethernet cabling, dimensions variable.

Beyond this web of cabling the viewer encounters a finely engraved aluminium panel placed centrally on the rear wall of the space (figure 28). Etched into its surface are rows of numbers and symbols. The engraving is taken from a section of a Google facial recognition algorithm downloaded from Wikileaks.[191] The algorthimic text is deeply embedded into the plate's polished surface. A spotlight was focussed on the plate permitting the viewer a glimpse of their own mirrored self in its reflective surface. The reflection on the plate is both a portrait and not. The surface of the plate is obscured by the etched algorithm and is thus rendered ineffectual as a mirror for the viewer to catch their image in.

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[191] Florian Schroff, Dmitry Kalenichenko, and James Philbin, "Facenet: A Unified Embedding for Face Recognition and Clustering" (paper presented at the Proceedings of the IEEE Conference on Computer Vision and Pattern Recognition, 2015).
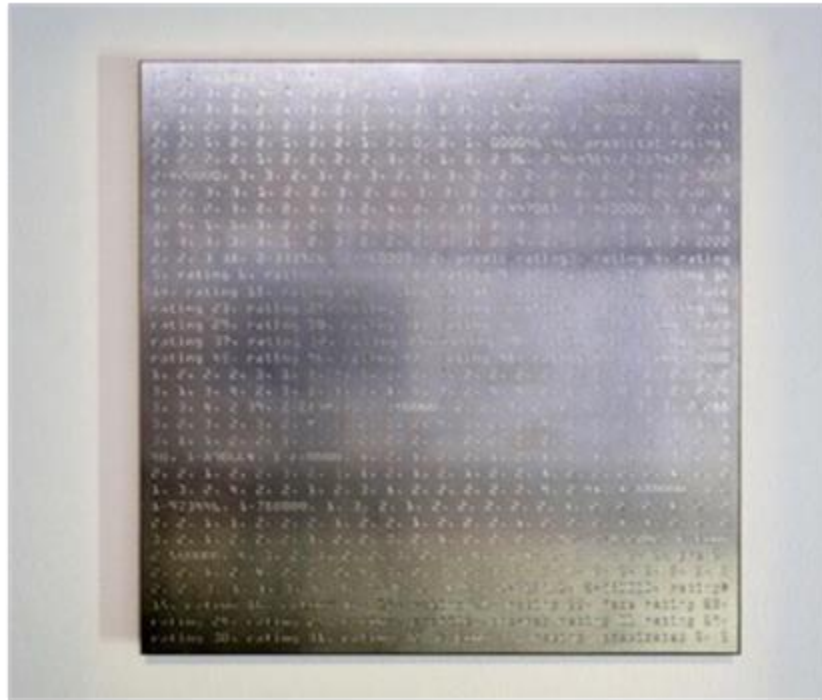
Figure 28. Gianni Wise *This is not that, that is not this*, 2016

Reproduced Ian Hobbs. Engraved aluminium panel.

Data Retention II owes some of its visual origins to physical archives in state record keeping rooms such as the famous archives of the former Stasi headquarters of the East German secret police, and more locally Australia's own secret service ASIO.[192] These systems of physical filing, folders, boxes, samples and summaries of human activity have a similar rationale to todays' logic of data correlation and the extraction of paranoid meanings from data-gathering intelligence that now is the dominant condition of possibility for the new automated *Aufschreibesystem*.[193] Within these rooms, life and death is subsumed into a system "that could be said to suffer from an irreversible nervous paranoia."[194] Equally the cables and technical apparatus in any server room can be perceived as components of digital 'record keeping room'. Yet the sheer overload of information is not simply contained within a single room. Data accelerates our deepest fears, moving from room to room, from server to server

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[192] The Stasi is examined further in Wilson sisters' video installation *Stasi City*, in Chapter 2.

[193] Friedrich Kittler adopts this term *Aufschreibesystem* (trans: writing system) in his media theory technical facilities which serve the purpose of storing data, permitting a culture to address, store and process relevant data. He sees the phase of digital storage as being a convergence of media. This could be interpreted as the digital image or sign as central to data.

[194] Friedrich A Kittler and Gerhard Johann Lischka, *Die Nacht Der Substanz* (Benteli Verlag, 1989). 369.

through multiple nodes and networks. The "abundance and acceleration" of data passing through systems such as the NSA, Google and the like is uncontainable to any singular physical space.

Permanent data

Data Retention II was conceived as a physical installation, not as an expression of data's physicality, but because of the permanence of data on the network. Ashley Ellis in her essay "Transcending Time and Death: Immortality in a Simulated World", argues that online activity has a vitality and longevity not possible in the physical book or written record.[195] Data is maintained in multiple secured locations globally, greatly increasing chances of the information being found. Immortality now exists in a simulated world. Data storage and retention make possible the immortality of something seemingly ephemeral.[196] I developed this installation realising the horror of the immortality of data–both simulated and permanent. I discuss this further in chapter 5 when I consider the motives for Steyerl's *How Not to Be Seen* which "makes explicit reference to this dark side of disappearance, suggesting that those who are disappeared in the digital age end up as 3-D ghosts […] frequently haunted by […] ghosts, for example those stateless individuals whose identities are lost in State database systems." The server rack components for the installation, have an almost neural cybernetic quality, a room for the viewer to become entangled in, somewhere where data has immortalised its human subjects.

Why not the visualisation data as of 0, 1?

In providing a conceptual background for this exhibition, I recognised when initially conceiving this artwork that data resists any mimetic tradition of representation because its effects are often global, gradual, and irreducible to traditional representation such as organic terms such as forest for example.[197] I have found that the challenge of representing and conceptualising data has led me to experiment

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[195] Data on the internet is a thought that cannot be deleted as we understand it. It is cached on Google, Google spiders, the Internet archive, the Wayback Machine, and on the various global archival servers of the NSA.

[196] Ashley Ellis, "Transcending Time and Death: Immortality in a Simulated World," in *Ontic Flows: From Digital Humanities to Posthumanities*, ed. M. Bernico and 2016). M. Kolke Atropos Press (New York, Dresden: Atropos Press 2016). 23, 29.

[197] It is easier to find a mimetic representation of 'network' than data. See Chapter 5.

into data and data infrastructure's aesthetics, and materiality. While wanting to allow the sense of data flowing throughout a space, I deliberately wanted to avoid representing data by refraining from visualising its abstract processes as if it were an "object" (data as flashing 0, 1 binary code) that a viewer could observe objectively from a safe, external vantage point. Instead, I wanted to find a means of grasping the transformations of lived experience in the shifting terrain of human-machinic interaction, and data's act of processing as something essentially substantial yet unknown. This led to a decision to adopt the material logic of the ubiquitous computer server room that may have (retained) data in servers. My intention was to imply a theatrical human-machinic interaction where it was possible to imagine a 'knowing' of data. I also chose to avoid the flatness of oft-employed representations of data such as interactive mapping or animated projection. I wanted to avoid the positivist prosaicism that these visual representations can foist on a viewer such as the visualisation of Big Data. *Data Retention II* brings to the foreground the tension between current faith in global data systems and the co-existent unease that data produces. *Data Retention II* was not intended to focus on the spectacle of the information technological era and its resultant neo-liberal efficiencies.

Data's multiple paradoxes

My interest in data is also in the multiple paradoxes that it contains. One that is most evident is the way that software developers have made the transfer and retention of data appear more personalised, giving the impression of our world centres around ourselves. Hankey in a discussion on human identity and data sees this as the self "mediated back to us through entirely de-subjectified calculations and statistical mediums."[198] As *Data Retention II* suggests, today individuals are increasingly intertwined in the data generated through their own lives. We as individuals increasingly exist as anxious, subjective selves that transform with the ebbs and flows of data-capitalism. The self increasingly is an illusionary existence–existing on the basis of technologically 'perfect' interconnections within a deeply anxious

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[198] Stephanie Hankey Anselm Franke, Marek Tuszynski, "Nervous Systems: Quantified Life and the Social Question," in *Nervous Systems*, ed. The Haus der Kulturen der Welt (Berlin: KW Institut, 2016). 14.

world.[199] Technologies attached to data flows are capable of herding our cognitive functioning–into spaces where our socially mediated paranoias multiply almost virally. This is visualised in the engraved aluminium plate that in effect demonstrates how the flow of digital data through the network of interconnected computers is at once not "real", since one could not spatially locate it as a tangible object, and clearly "real" in its effects such as in dataveillance. What *Data Retention II* expresses is the recognition of the dark heartedness of these data flows through an almost cyber jungle of cabling. It functions as an imaginary forest of 'a dark heartedness'.

The transfer and retention of data through cyberspace as an expression of our anxious, subjective selves gives rise to a perpetual hyperreality. Yet, as expressed previously, data retains a longevity of existing on multiple servers and locations–in two states–both physical and simulated. The subjective selves retained on server hard drives owned by Google, Google spiders, the Internet archive, the Wayback Machine, and on the various global archival servers of the NSA.[200] The title, *Data Retention II,* points to current Australian Federal Government policies regarding the retention (or caching) of metadata.[201] The implications of having this law is that legalises the retention of metadata is part a trend of being monitored and where more information about us out there that can be tracked or monitored. This 2014-5 bill, enacted in times of a climate of deepening global insecurity has been a key initiator for this exhibition.

These considerations pertain to key themes in this thesis. Specifically, this installation responded to one particular theme emerging out of Chapter 5 as it explores the nature of irrational fear inherent within an increasingly networked society where our relationship to the flows of capital, digital, the real, the virtual is uncertain. *Data Retention II* establishes an ambience of irrational fear through imaginative means–an aluminium plate as 'self' (figures 25, 28), peers out from

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[199] Bifo Berardi in Engineering Self: ""Self-design" can be thought of as the authorship of one's own subjectivity." This can also be considered as Ellis states, that the network re-represents text and media in a digital form that creates a perpetual hyperreality (Baudrillard's 3rd order of simulacra).

[200] The Wayback Machine is The Internet Archive is a nonprofit digital library with the intention of "universal access to all knowledge" It creates screen shots of the history of most major sites over at least 10 years. The Internet Archive is a non-profit library of free e-books, movies, software, music, websites, and more.

[201] Attorney-General's Department, "Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Amendment (Data Retention) Bill 2014," https://www.ag.gov.au/dataretention.

behind an almost brutalist ancient forest of decaying and transmutative technical apparatus; a library-cum-cyberspace or post human and data paradox.

Figure 29. Gianni Wise, *Data Retention II* (detail), 2016

Reproduced Ian Hobbs. Computer server racks, computer servers, Ethernet cabling, tie wire, LED lighting, fluorescent tubes, perfect bound books, engraved aluminium panel, looped audio.

Figure 30. Gianni Wise, *Data Retention II* (detail), 2016

Reproduced Gianni Wise. Computer server racks, computer servers, Ethernet cabling, tie wire, LED lighting, fluorescent tubes, looped audio.
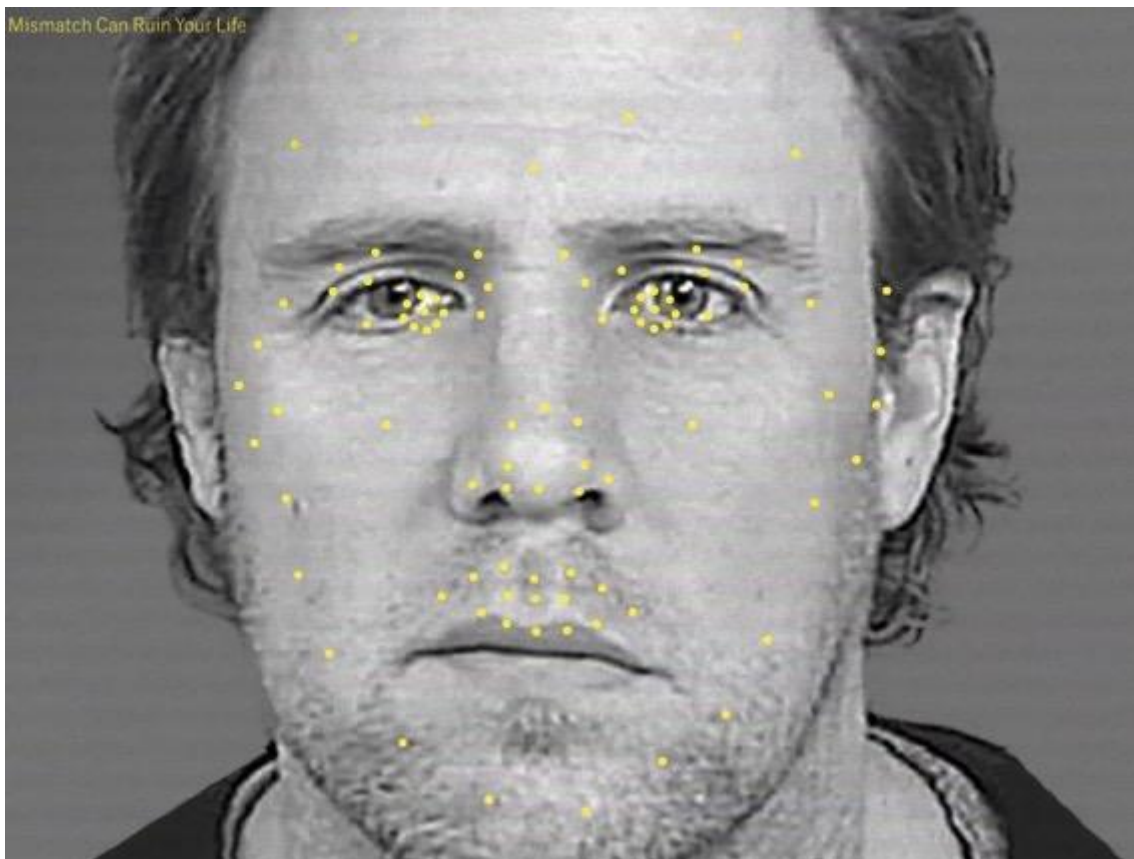

Mismatch Can Ruin Your Life

Figure 31. *Recognition mismatch can ruin your life* 2016

1.a. The idée fixe: introduction to constructing paranoia

The Oxford English Dictionary defines *idée fixe* as "an idea or desire that dominates the mind; an obsession."[202] Equally in psychoanalysis *Idée fixe* is defined as an idea that dominates the mind, an obsession.[203] It refers to not only a form of stasis but may incorporate an incessant returning to one view, thought or point.

The term idée fixe importantly points to the title of the thesis: paranoid fixation. Paranoia is often defined as a tightly held view where symbols become fixed in the public consciousness through popular media. Arguably, the predominant symbol of paranoid fixation today is the bearded jihadist of ISIL, replacing the balaclava of the hijacker of twenty years ago.[204] Following 9/11, symbols of paranoid fixation have included Al-Qaeda and the War on Terror. Al-Qaeda became a symbol of retribution, instigated as a symbol for a war against "the most dangerous thing in national security. It was an idée fixe, a rigid belief, received wisdom, a decision already made and one that no fact or event could derail".[205]

These symbols of paranoia are frequently fixed in the public consciousness through the image. In the introduction it is argued, following Joselit, that images are now taking multiple forms as a digital data file. The digital image is now repeated as symbol of fixed fear throughout an increasingly networked society.[206] Richard A Clarke proposes that this has had a profound effect on our view of the world. In this millennium we have seen a spectacularisation of world events through the virtualisation of their representation. Social media is able to almost instantaneously repeat media images (image-events), recasting them as world events. These image-events travel through social and news media networks with increasing speed. As

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[202] Dictionary.

[203] Paul Street, "An Idée Fixe and a Vicious Circle," (2014), http://www.telesurtv.net/english/opinion/An-Idee-Fixe-and-a-Vicious-Circle-20140908-0074.html. Monomania is the formal term.

[204] The symbol of the balaclava became fixed in the public conscious following terror events such as the Munich Olympics (1972), The Red Brigade and later International airline hijackings.

[205] Richard A Clarke, *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror* (Simon and Schuster, 2008). 29.

[206] The networked society is examined further in Chapter 5. Originally coined by Manuel Castells in 1981, networks appeared in Castells' works in the late 1980s, when he became interested in the configuration of the relationships between technology, economy, and society. Today it incorporates the digital economy and social networking.

such, they represent a paranoid fixation with the spectacle of disaster. Images of the balaclava figure comingled with the hooded figure in ISIL YouTube clips (figure 32) repeat as the sign throughout the networked society. Reality retreats into non-meaning in what Clare Bishop calls "…a desubjectification of the pancinematic spectacle as described by Virilio and Baudrillard."[207] The image is now dehumanised. It becomes the repeated and fixed sign of irrational fear.

Figure 32. *Munich Olympics and ISIL masks*, 2015

Reproduced montage from AP/Kurt Strumpf, http://www.timesofisrael.com/plo-terrorists-castrated-israeli-hostage-in-1972-olympic-attack/, Naharnet http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/156454, accessed 29 March, 2015

Baudrillard perceives the idée fixe as relating to the ever-proliferating world of objects as images and their dominance over the subject. In *Fatal Strategies*[208], Baudrillard described an object world that was totally out of control, metastasising like cancer. He continued this direction in successive works including *The Ecstasy of Communication* and *America.*[209] In *The Spirit of Terrorism,* Baudrillard spoke specifically of "a world saturated with images, our primary experience of the disaster was as an "image-event." [210] For Baudrillard the image-as-sign takes the event

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[207] Patricia Pisters, *Logistics of Perception 2.0: Multiple Screen Aesthetics in Iraq War Films*, vol. 14 (2010), Screen Culture; War Films; Iraq. 232-233.
[208] Jean Baudrillard, *Fatal Strategies* (London: Pluto, 1990). 22-26.
[209] *America* (London ; New York, NY: Verso, 1989).
[210] *The Spirit of Terrorism and Other Essays*. 21.

"hostage"; it "consumes the event," and thus "absorbs the event and offers it for consumption".

Essentially Baudrillard has posited the end of a clear subject to object relationship.[211] He argued against any possibility of understanding the nature of reality because of the break between the sign as an image and the object it is supposed to represent. According to Douglas Kellner, Baudrillard is a "strong simulacrist," who perceives that the media and consumer society are entrapped by "the play of images, spectacles, and simulacra, that have less and less relationship to an outside, to an external 'reality,'" and thus are "narcoticized and mesmerized as the "media-saturated consciousness is in such a state of fascination with image and spectacle that the concept of meaning itself (which depends on stable boundaries, fixed structures, shared consensus) dissolves."[212]

In this sense, all images or representations could be seen as relative, particularly in a digital and networked world following 9/11. Following Baudrillard's reasoning, art's relationship to the object is less clear now that the relationship between subject and object has changed profoundly.

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[211] Baudrillard comes from a literary perspective, yet also explored the system of objects and signs which forms our everyday life. This developed later into his views that postmodern societies are organised around *simulation* and the play of images and signs–in which codes, models, and signs form new social orders. This then followed as a society of simulation, where identities are constructed through the appropriation of images, and 'models'. This relates to how individuals perceive the external world– especially in economics, politics, and consumption.
In other words, even if as you say the art of the past century has employed objects and environments as well as images to generate affect and carry meaning, in the end all culture is guided by simulation as the image. This then results in the excess common (as Bataille, argued "human beings were beings of *excess* with exorbitant energy, fantasies, drives, needs, and heterogeneous desire") to humanity of "a world saturated with images, our primary experience of the disaster was as an "image-event."
[212] Douglas Kellner, "Jean Baudrillard," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (2015).

1.b. Baudrillard's view: Stephen Birch's Spiderman

This section introduces how Baudrillard interprets the construction of paranoia. Specific attention is given to his analysis of the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent War on Terror through of his interpretation of hyperreality and its relationship to image, fiction, and the loss of the real event. Stephen Birch's *Untitled* (aka Spiderman) is discussed as an example of how art can evoke the spectre of paranoia through a putative symbol of evil, Osama bin Laden. Baudrillard, as covered in the introduction, is central to this thesis for his focus on the relationship between communication, the media, the virtual, terrorism, art and war. His readings of 9/11 in his text *The Spirit of Terrorism* have been examined within the sections of this thesis, including his analysis of the hyperreality of media events and irrational fear and terror.

Most importantly, Baudrillard's arguments have persistently reflected upon the notion that signification and meaning are both understandable in terms of how particular words or *signs* "refer back towards the internal exchange of other signs".[213] Baudrillard considered meaning to be constructed through systems of signs working together. In particular, it is his reflections on the breaking of the connection between the symbol and its object—such as the image of a pet dog compared to the 'real' dog—that is significant to this thesis. This slippage, termed *hyperreality*, is important in the way it has served to assist in critical debates on mass media, cinema and art (amongst other fields) since the 1990s. A central element of hyperreality is the concept of simulation or simulacra. The simulacrum is basically defined as a copy without an original. In 1994, Baudrillard argued that the simulacrum, within the changing nature of the media of late capitalism, was simply a sign with no referents within a global hyperreality.[214] Henrik Gustafsson, in his essay on the aesthetic*s* of artwork of Trevor Paglen,[215] confirms this in his reference to the 9/11 Commission Report released in July 2004.[216] According to the Commission, it was not sufficient

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[213] Nicholas Oberly, "Reality, Hyperreality," *The University of Chicago: Theories of Media. Winter* 1 (2003).

[214] Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*.

[215] Henrik Gustafsson, "Foresight, Hindsight and State Secrecy in the American West: The Geopolitical Aesthetics of Trevor Paglen," *Journal of Visual Culture* 12, no. 1 (2013). 148-149; Trevor Paglen is discussed in Chapter 4.

[216] 9/11 Commission, "Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States," *Washington, DC: US Government* (2004). 344.

for the US to use military force in the War on Terror but it also needed to "recruit imagination," suggesting that they understood the logic of the sign.[217] In other words, it was understood that the image precedes reality, picturing precedes perception, and vision precedes war.[218] The Bush administration later responded with the tactics of shock-and-awe and the use of the media to find a way represent their military interventions. The "new world order required new order[s]" of simulacra that pre-empted other future conflict or terror events. Baudrillard, in *The Spirit of Terrorism,* argued that 9/11 was "the absolute event, the 'mother' of all events,"[219] and that it could only be fathomed through "countless disaster movies bear[ing] witness to this fantasy, which they clearly attempt to exorcize with images, drowning out the whole thing with special effects."[220]

Baudrillard's use of the term hyperreality is fundamental to the core themes in this thesis. Following the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent War on Terror, Baudrillard wrote a number of reflections on the major changes to US foreign policy. Despite 9/11 representing for Baudrillard a "real and formidable, unique and unforeseen event," he recognised the role of the media in replaying video footage as "a repetitive, rehashed pseudo-event."[221] As the event is transformed into the spectacle "we are once again in the exile of the virtual, sheltered from both the real and the imaginary—back to what we regard as reality."[222]

Baudrillard also recognised the deep anxiety in the media's treatment of the event following 9/11. This is demonstrated in how original footage, taken during the event, was recut and replayed in an *obsessive returning* to the simulacra of the event. He argues that the obsessive returning to the time of the bombing of the Twin Towers was a neurotic desire to re-enact the event as a spectacle of terror. Baudrillard did not deny that 9/11 was a significant moment in world events, yet he also recognised

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[217] The US military used the services of Hollywood directors, writers and cinematographers investigating possible scenarios for the reasons for the attacks. Baudrillard also recognised the power of the image in: Paul Hegarty, *Jean Baudrillard: Live Theory* (A&C Black, 2004). 58-59.
[218] Ibid.
[219] Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism and Other Essays.* 8.
[220] Ibid. 10.
[221] Ibid. 25.
[222] Markus Kienscherf, "Simulation, Hyperreality and the Gulf War(S)," (2004), http://www.grin.com/en/e-book/47023/simulation-hyperreality-and-the-gulf-war-s. 3 Nicholas Oberly, "Reality, Hyperreality," in *Theories of Media, Keywords Glossary* (The University of Chicago, 2003).

that the significance of how it was transmitted through multiple emerging media forms, asking "[h]ow do things stand with the real event, then, if reality is everywhere infiltrated by images, virtuality and fiction?"[223] The danger is that the image consumes the event, in the sense that it absorbs it and prepares it for consumption.[224]

In his essay "In the Shadow of Silent Majorities," Baudrillard reveals that he is deeply suspicious of the role of both the media and the average person in interpreting and comprehending events such as global warming or acts of terror. He further argues that the average person is conditioned to spectacle:

> Messages are given to them, they only want some sign, they idolise the play of signs and stereotypes, they idolise any content so long as it resolves itself into a spectacular sequence. What they reject is the 'dialectic' of meaning… They scent the simplifying terror which is behind the ideal hegemony of meaning, and they react in their own way, by reducing all articulate discourse to a single irrational and baseless dimension, where signs lose their meaning and peter out in fascination: the spectacular.[225]

Notable also is the radicalised position that Baudrillard took towards visual art in the late 1990s. Joseph Tanke states that this position was demonstrated in a series of strongly worded critiques on the art world in the mid to late 1990s, where Baudrillard claimed art had subjugated itself to capital. This occurred "despite his initial romance with the New York [artworld]."[226] In his critiques of the artworld Baudrillard drew on some of his earlier material on simulacra, simulation and hyperreality to identify contemporary art as effectively having ended under the applied aesthetics of capital. In *The Transparency of Evil* he further developed his speculations on the end of art, citing an "exhaustion of artistic creativity, or a situation where everything has been

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[223] Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism and Other Essays*. 21.
[224] Jean Baudrillard and David B Clarke, eds., *Jean Baudrillard: From Hyperreality to Disappearance: Uncollected Interviews* (Edinburgh University Press, 2015). 171, 180.
[225] Jean Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities, or, the End of the Social*, Semiotext(E) Foreign Agents Series (Los Angeles, Cambridge, Mass.: Semiotext(e) ; Distributed by MIT Press, 2007). 10-11.
[226] Joseph Tanke, "What Is the Aesthetic Regime?," *Parrhesia* 12 (2011). 76.

done and there is nothing new to do."[227] Baudrillard reasoned that modernism's belief that the function of art was to provide "fresh ways of seeing," to see through illusions to find some 'real,'[228] was fallacious because art "is merely a set of signs":

> Art is subject to the same rules and system of signification as other commodities and follows as well the codes of fashion, determination of value by the market and commodification, thus subverting its critical vocation. Modern art is thus for Baudrillard an 'art of collusion vis-à-vis the contemporary world. It plays with it and is included in the game. It can parody this world, illustrate it, simulate it, alter it; it never disturbs the order, which is also its own.'[229]

Douglas Keller concludes that Baudrillard's emerging negative views most likely originated from his theories of art as simulation and hyperreality assembled together in *Simulacra and Simulation,* and which in turn "came to influence new avant-garde movements in the art world. Consequently, Baudrillard himself was taken as a major theoretical guru in the world of contemporary art […] increasingly referred to and cited in discussions of the art world."[230] Whether Baudrillard held a conspiratorial position on art is debatable, yet his dismissal of contemporary art is grounded in his view of all media forms. He saw contemporary art as having "penetrated all spheres of existence," losing its autonomy, resulting in "a confused and imploded condition where there are no more criteria of value, of judgement."[231] According to Baudrillard, art's very excess had been integrated in the proliferation of images within media and consumer society.

In concluding this line of thought, it is useful to relate Baudrillard's latter views on art to his response to the human tragedy of 9/11. According to Keller, given the enormity of the 9/11 event to Baudrillard, then "[a]s Adorno asked, how can there be poetry after Auschwitz, Baudrillard might ask, how can there be art after 9/11?"[232] This thesis will argue there is a place for art given that all production now increasingly

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[227] Jean Baudrillard and James Benedict, *The Transparency of Evil : Essays on Extreme Phenomena* (London New York: Verso, 1993).
[228] Douglas Kellner, "Baudrillard and the Art Conspiracy," in *Jean Baudrillard: Fatal Theories*, ed. David B Clarke, et al. (Taylor & Francis e-Library: Routledge, 2008)., 94.
[229] Ibid. 94.
[230] Ibid. 96.
[231] Ibid. 96-97.
[232] David B Clarke et al., *Jean Baudrillard: Fatal Theories* (Routledge, 2008). , 101.

resides in the image—at least at some point in its life cycle. It is useful to recognise that, although Baudrillard has nearly always been serious in his rejections, he equally maintains an ironic tone suggesting the possibility of the opposing view. To take one position in response to his writing is a mistake. He appears to be a master of reversal and as such his mode of operation could be seen as a form of dissensus via tactics of estrangement.

Stephen Birch was an Australian artist whose practice drew upon mythology, art history and popular culture.[233] His work consisted of moulded plant-like forms, human figures and everyday urban objects. The particular work discussed here, *Untitled* (2004), comprises two figures: one a slightly deformed Spiderman figure facing off with the other—an aged, bearded creature resembling Osama bin Laden (figure 33). It is evident upon approaching the installation that there is a tension between the superhero-Spiderman figure and his archenemy, the Osama bin Laden figure. However, Spiderman is slightly deformed and not quite the hero we expect. Given Spiderman's imperfections, their relationship is unclear. Despite this, Birch's Spiderman is popular at its home at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA). Visitors are drawn in by this symbolic encounter between the iconic hero and his nemesis. Yet this work is also successful because it speaks on differing levels. The play of hero figure against the spectacle of terror and irrational fear is accompanied by something less visible. Beyond the excess of the sign is the suspicion that this superhero is a fake. Spiderman's imperfections cause a slippage out of direct relation to the sign, permitting more imaginative readings that tap into repressed fears and paranoia.

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[233] Stephen Birch, *Untitled,* 2005. Spiderman meets Bin Laden. Museum of Contemporary Art. Stephen Birch 1961-2007.

Figure 33. Stephen Birch, *Untitled*, 2007

1.c. Rancière: shifting from indignation to the affect of curiosity

French philosopher, critic, and political theorist Jacques Rancière argues that a new relationship between art and politics requires dissensus or a break with the common experience of the sensible. His theories are particularly beneficial for artists engaged in the examination of art and its relationship to politics. Rancière's position on politics and aesthetics is examined through the photographic work of Sophie Ristelhueber, who developed a series of large digital images relating to the political situation in the West Bank in Palestine.

Rancière started out as a structuralist Marxist in the 1960s, being a student of Louis Althusser. However, Rancière split with him after the May '68 worker-student rebellion against the de Gaulle government. Rancière set out to construct a progressive theory of art. Like Baudrillard, who applied his research to a number of different areas, Rancière has worked with philosophical, historiographical, political, sociological, and aesthetic concerns.

This thesis is concerned with his short volume *The Politics of Aesthetics* for two reasons.[234] Firstly, he attends to and reflects directly on art and its relationship to the aesthetic and political realms; and secondly, he proposes a fresh position on the relationship between these two concepts. Rancière is mostly known for his concept of the *distribution of the sensible*, which is essentially his definition of politics. According to Eli Bornowsky, "this distribution is composed of the principles which condition what is possible to see and hear, to say and think, to do and make."[235] Quite literally, Rancière lays out the conditions of possibility for the awareness, thought, and activity, and what it is possible to perceive by the senses alone.

One cogent aspect of his reasoning is his particular unwillingness to engage in any single political position. *The Politics of Aesthetics* does not prescribe any specific position for art and its relation to politics. Instead, art is given a special position in

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[234] Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics : The Distribution of the Sensible*.
[235] Eli Bornowsky, "Notes on the Politics of Aesthetics," *Fillip4 Fall* (2006). 1.

what he terms the aesthetic regime of art: there are various hierarchies for the other creative regimes (such as craft), yet he provides art with an unconditional 'singularity' or autonomy while at the same time choosing not to isolate it from politics and life. In other words, he establishes the "autonomy of art and the identity of its forms with the forms that life uses to shape itself."[236] This is explained further in *The Emancipated Spectator* through an investigation of the role of political art as an effective strategy in contemporary art.[237] Rancière identifies this role as being an *emancipatory practice,* where the artist should be more like "the ignorant schoolmaster" who "does not teach his pupils his knowledge, but orders them to venture into the forest of things and signs, to say what they have seen and what they think of what they have seen, to verify it and have it verified."[238] The emancipated spectator, like these pupils, has the ability to draw new associations and disassociations from the spectacle of life. Thus, for Rancière, this emancipation does not arise from any direct critique of society: such an approach, he suggests, is paternalistic and elitist.

In *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* (2010), Rancière examines notions of consensus in an investigation of the relationship between art and politics. As he notes, "Art and politics each define a form of *dissensus*, a dissensual re-configuration of the common experience of the sensible."[239] In contrast, in his view, the present day is a time of consensus. Subsequently, there is a generally agreed or accepted distribution of social roles that at times frame and even restrict us from acting as independent entities, thus limiting our ability to think or act. Rancière argues that for art to have a relationship to politics it requires dissensus or a break with 'the established order.' In *Dissensus* Rancière defines this established order as the agreed order of hierarchical distributions of common experience.[240] Rancière claims dissensual aesthetic experience "is a multiplicity of folds" in the "sensory fabric" of common experience that changes the mapping of what is perceivable, thinkable and possible.[241] In other words, he advocates a disruption of accepted views of aesthetics and politics. In Rancière's view, art needs to necessarily

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[236] Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics* (A&C Black, 2013). 23.
[237] Jacques Rancière and Gregory Elliott, *The Emancipated Spectator* (London: Verso, 2009). 11.
[238] Ibid. 11.
[239] Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015).140
[240] *Dissensus on Politics and Aesthetics*. 21-22.
[241] Ibid. 198-199.

withdraw from direct political usefulness. He states that art and aesthetics need to work paradoxically in order to rupture any direct and obvious relationships between politics and art. He terms this "aesthetic efficacy," a "rupturing of any determinate link between cause and effect."[242] In this sense he is in agreement with German cultural critic Theodor Adorno, who criticises instrumentally engaged political art, asserting that art is best in expressing social contradictions rather than asserting clear political action.

Responding to Rancière's provocations does not necessarily mean producing art as an overt act of activism. It can instead take subtle forms, such as the way an image is perceived or which images are chosen for exhibition. Claire Bishop, in her examination of Rancière's position on politics and art, argues that she prefers an "art that values disruption […] as a form of resistance to instrumental rationality."[243] For this thesis, Rancière's dissensus will be investigated as a model for a political art practice that avoids the re-emergence of fixed views (the idée fixe). In order to understand dissensus more fully in terms of art and the role of the image, it is useful to return to the image and its role in art. For Rancière, an image is never a solitary duplication of reality. He sees it as an element in a chain that weaves a sense of reality. The point is to build over apparent realities with other forms of common sense. This is what Rancière referred to as dissensus: creating forms of dissensus is a form of "fiction-making [that] does not mean making stories—it means constructing another sense of reality."[244.] When he speaks of the image and politics he is pointing to the scepticism that had developed in regard to the possibility of the image containing any political power. He says this scepticism has arisen where there is a "straight line linking affection, understanding and action."[245] The question for Rancière is how to regain trust in the political authority of the image.

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[242] Rancière and Elliott. 63.
[243] Bishop. 26-28, 32.
[244] Jacques Rancière, "What Makes Images Unacceptable," (Northwest College of Art in Portland, Oregon, 2008).
[245] Ibid.

Rancière, in a conversation with Fulvia Carnevale (2009) on the nature of dissensus,[246] used the example of the artist Sophie Ristelhueber, who developed a series of large digital images relating to the political situation in the West Bank.[247] Looking at these images reveals superficially "a lovely pastoral landscape," yet these works are a commentary on the Israeli blockades on the Palestinian movement and freedom in the territory (figure 34).[248] Ristelhueber chose to not symbolise this issue with the more obvious icons such as the Israeli West Bank barrier—something that is entrenched in the media and is iconic of the Middle East problem. Instead, her lens was pointed at minor blockades on local country roads or in rural village settings. By not choosing the "fixed signifier" such as a wall or barbed wire fence, and instead choosing "tracks and scars on the landscapes," there is a "shift from the worn affect of 'indignation' to a more promising affect of curiosity."[249] Ristelhueber is constructing another sense of reality in her choice of symbols. Her work will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

Figure 34. Sophie Ristelhueber, *WB #48*, 2005

Colour photograph, silver print mounted on aluminium 120 x 150 cm,
Reproduced Sophie Ristelhueber, WB #48, 2005; Courtesy Galerie Poggi, Paris,
http://www.galeriepoggi.com/cspdocs/press/files/portfolio_sophieristelhueber_2015_en.pdf, accessed 21 March 2015

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[246] Fulvia Carnevale and John Kelsey, "Art of the Possible: An Interview with Jacques Rancière," *Artforum International* 45, no. 7 (2007). 259-261; Devin Zane Shaw, *Egalitarian Moments: From Descartes to Rancière* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015). 18.
[247] Laure Vermeersch, "Sophie Ristelhueber," (2004).
[248] Rancière.
[249] Fulvia Carnevale and John Kelsey, "Art of the Possible: Fulvia Carnevale and John Kelsey in Conversation with Jacques Ranciere," (Artforum International Magazine, Inc, 2007). 261.

Armenian–Syrian artist Hrair Sarkissian grew up in Damascus, Syria. In a series of photographs of large format prints titled *Execution Squares,* Sarkissian employs traditional documentary techniques to capture the early morning light of Aleppo, Syria (figure 35).[250] He chooses to represent war-torn Aleppo as a series of bucolic scenes of everyday life, shot in the early morning when traffic has not taken over and the light is perfect. However, an accompanying statement reveals that all of these images were taken at the time and the place of executions. The link between the images and reality was evaded. These photos are non-duplicates of reality, constructed for the viewer to permit another sense of reality. This work demonstrates that "art and politics [can] each define a form of *dissensus*, a dissensual re-configuration of the common experience of the sensible."[251] The room sheet that accompanies these works when exhibited supports this: "the quiet images reveal a fragile paradox that exists between beauty and constancy of the physical environment and the political and social realities that they obscure."[252] Here in the photographic strategies employed by Sarkissian and Ristelhueber, Rancière points towards another politics, one based on the distance of the gaze (in this case of the lens)—one that can have unpredictable results. Images such as these change our reading of the visible to the extent that meaning can be not anticipated, and where the artist does not anticipate their effect on the viewer.[253]

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[250] Hrair Sarkissian, *Execution Squares* 2015. Archival inkjet prints, 125 x 160 cm, 125 x 175 cm. KW Institute for Contemporary Art; Tate Modern.
[251] Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics.*140.
[252] Sarkissian.
[253] Drusilla Beyfus, "Sophie Ristelhueber: Deutsche Börse Photography Prize," *The Telegraph*, 25 Jan 2010 2010. In an interview with Ristelhueber she points out: 'My real interest is […] revealing the scars and the traces on the ground,' she told me. 'I am dedicated to the earth.' An example is her series of images of bomb craters, titled *Eleven Blowups*, which relied in part on visual sleight of hand.

Figure 35. Hrair Sarkissian, *Execution Squares*, 2008

12 Archival inkjet prints mounted on aluminium, 125 x 160 cm, 125 x 175 cm. Reproduced Hrair Sarkissian, http://hrairsarkissian.com/work/execution-squares/, accessed 29 March, 2015

1.d. Baudrillard and Rancière: models for critique

This section provides a short critique of the possible relationship between Baudrillard and Rancière. Despite their apparently divergent theoretical positions, there are a few critical areas where these two theorists may reach a consensus. This section presents some of the key criticisms of both Baudrillard and Rancière, then posits a provisional shared understanding between them.

Both Rancière and Baudrillard have critiqued visual culture, design studies, human geography, photography, film studies, sociology, art history and art theory. Yet Baudrillard in particular has focussed his attention on media and communication studies, and cyberculture, and as such, today, his work is intellectually unavoidable. According to David B. Clarke, the establishment of the online International Journal of Baudrillard Studies in 2004 is a reflection of his influence.[254]

A number of theorists in the English speaking world have criticised Baudrillard's oeuvre. In the 1980s criticism of Baudrillard was mistakenly centred around dismissing him as merely postmodernist.[255] Subsequently, theorists including Mike Gane have recognised the wit and irony of Baudrillard's writing,[256] and his "symbolic and semiotic playfulness," and thus he refutes "Baudrillard's undeserved reputation as an apologist for postmodernity and a more serious contextualization of his thought in relation to the Durkheimian–Maussian tradition of sociology."[257]

Others such as Douglas Kellner have interpreted Baudrillard as a provocateur who took the very basis for 'the real' in the mediated landscape of the image to an extreme position.[258] Kellner argues that Baudrillard worked to extend the existing boundaries of perception in order to provoke fresh understandings of our visual culture. A clear example is his reflection following the Gulf War titled *The Gulf War*

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[254] Clarke et al. 4-5.
[255] Ibid. 4.
[256] Charles J Stivale and Mike Gane, "Baudrillard: Critical and Fatal Theory," (JSTOR, 1993). 82.
[257] Clarke et al. 5.
[258] Douglas Keller, "Baudrillard and the art conspiracy" in Kellner, "Baudrillard and the Art Conspiracy." 102, 106.

Did Not Take Place. For Baudrillard this text was essentially a provocation, an invitation even, to see the event from a fresh perspective.

Baudrillard consistently expressed the dissociation between the event and its representation in contemporary art and theory (as outlined in the introduction). However, what is not often acknowledged is that he is part of a wider French tradition of theorists that adopted creatively critical approaches to find new perspectives with which to reach beyond superficial social appearances and solutions. This is particularly evident in his reading of war, terror, and mediated events at the beginning of this millenium.[259] It can be contended that the style of his provocations into the nature of our contemporary mediated reality are valuable as a strategy for an effective, socially engaged art. Like Roland Barthes, Guy Debord and Jacques Derrida, Baudrillard confronted what he perceived to be the emptiness at the heart of an increasingly sign-driven society.

Baudrillard's work also connects to that of many other theorists and thinkers outside of France. His predecessor was Canadian media and communications theorist Marshall McLuhan, who adopted another path, one that had a more positivist view of the developing new media of the late twentieth century. McLuhan is famous for coining the expression "the medium is the message,"[260] and recognising that the emergence of a "global village" would presage the age of the Internet.[261] He influenced a number of media theorists including Baudrillard and Timothy Leary and the artist Andy Warhol. Franco Berardi and Slavoj Žižek are more recent contemporaries of Baudrillard who are discussed in this thesis. Žižek is a social theorist who in some aspects has continued the tradition of Baudrillard, yet within a Marxist perspective. It has been argued that Žižek is the 'natural' descendent of Baudrillard. Keller suggests this is contestable because Žižek, even though he contributed to a media analysis in writings such as *Welcome To The Desert Of The Real!,* is more of a polemicist than Baudrillard. Both Žižek and Baudrillard have investigated the notion of truth in representation although from distinct positions. For

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[259] Jean Baudrillard and Paul A Taylor, "International Journal of Baudrillard Studies," (2005).
[260] Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, "The Medium Is the Message," *New York* 123 (1967).
[261] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (MIT press, 1994). 6.

Žižek, truth is interpreted through the Lacanian notion of the Real.[262] Essentially it involves a dialogue with Lacan, Kant, and Marx, albeit with a particular bent. His contemporary analysis continues Baudrillard's analysis of world events.

Rancière has been criticised for other reasons. Kristin Ross in an article for *Artforum* pointed out that one of the prevailing criticisms of Rancière is that his idea of the shared role of politics and aesthetics in art is "jarring to those of us schooled in a much simpler and more rigid division of labor between the two."[263] Many commentators and writers in art had, like Ross, been influenced by Walter Benjamin or by Susan Sontag, who "have warned us against the danger of 'aestheticizing politics.'"[264] In the realm of the art world Baudrillard's more cynical position could be found throughout the discourse of art criticism, proclaiming the bankruptcy of art in a world where the image was central.[265] Instead, according to Ross, Rancière was arguing that politics and art could be "engaged in a dialogue, opening in the consensus that there is only one reality, one space, one time."[266]

Despite their apparently divergent theoretical positions, both Baudrillard and Rancière arguably share a level of agreement on the nature of the image. In his critique of the image, Baudrillard uses a polemical and at times apparently contradictory critique of the media and images. This thesis contends that this strategy is both a means to re-imagine as well as a form of redistribution of the sensible, thus a dissensus. Rancière may consider this to be a form of disruption which breaks the consensus between a sign-event and its meaning.

This chapter has laid the groundwork for a more nuanced understanding of the themes and theoretical models developed throughout the thesis. It draws attention to the meanings and application of the construction of paranoia, specifically as it applies to the two key theorists, Baudrillard and Rancière, both of whom share the position that holding an idée fixe or fixed view is inherent to the construction of paranoia. This chapter has proposed that despite their divergent theoretical positions

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[262] Sean Sheehan, *Zizek: A Guide for the Perplexed* (A&C Black, 2012). 24-26.
[263] Kristin Ross, "Kristin Ross on Jacques Rancière," *Artforum international* 1 (2007).
[264] Ibid.
[265] When Jean Baudrillard wrote *The Conspiracy of Art* (1996), he probably offended many in the artistic community by pronouncing that contemporary art did not have a right to exist.
[266] Ross.

there are critical areas where they share common positions. Baudrillard uses a polemical and at times contradictory critique of the media and images that could be interpreted as a disruption of the sensible or an excessive form of dissensus. This chapter further argues that Baudrillard's rejection of art in general is seen as an example of estrangement as a tool of dissensus. His understanding on the nature of the image as sign is however distinct from that of Rancière, who speaks more directly to art and the aesthetics of politics. Arguably both theorists share one critical position: that there needs to be critiques of the media and images that disrupt the existing consensus of irrational fear. The following chapter commences a discussion on the relationship of cinema and video art forms to the construction and criticism of dominant narratives of state and social constructions of paranoia.